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COMMONWEAL

A SYMPOSIUM
GAY MARRIAGE

BRENT HARTINGER

DENNIS O'BRIEN

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

THE EDITORS

GUATEMALA:
an honest cop
Patrick Lacefield

SINS OF THE FATHERS
John Garvey

Stage
GERALD WEALES

Screen
RICHARD ALLEVA

Art
LEE SIEGEL

BOOKS

DAVID TOOLAN
on Andre Dubus

FRANCIS FLAHERTY
on Pericles of Athens

Religious Booknotes:
LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM

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CORRESPONDENCE

Gould & God

Alexandria, Va.

To the Editors: It's hard to know what to make of Nancy Haegel's review of Stephen Jay Gould's *Bully for Brontosaurus* [September 27]. In the book Gould asserts that evolution reflects no divine intent, that nature has nothing whatever to teach us about moral law, that humanity is but a "tiny and accidental evolutionary twig," a "mammalian afterthought" in an utterly indifferent universe, and that therefore "death is the ultimate enemy."

The question is not so much Gould's atheism as Haegel's silence about it in a *Commonweal* review. A magazine that testifies so eloquently to a living God cannot ignore the ramifications of the nonbelief of our country's most popular and influential science writer. Ms. Haegel's unbounded enthusiasm for Gould, appropriate for his gift of describing nature colorfully, suggests by its lack of reference to his mirthful nihilism either naiveté or complicity.

JOHN DAVID

The reviewer replies:

Mr. David's point is well taken. Let me first report that one of the editors raised the same issue, so Mr. David can rest assured that *Commonweal* remains in good hands. However, I specifically chose not to address "Gould's atheism" for two reasons. First, I rarely find such religious labels—atheist, agnostic, humanist—helpful and I hesitate to apply them if individuals do not do so themselves. Secondly, I am honestly not sure what the "ramifications of [Gould's] nonbelief" really are. Certainly his stance is a common one among scientists; commentary would be more appropriate if it were otherwise.

I do confess to complicity in believing that the scientific record alone does not support an interpretation of evolution in which we have a divinely ordained position of privilege. That, I think, is Gould's primary point and is reflected in some of the quotes in the review. As to questions of moral law, I will simply attempt to expand by letting Gould speak for himself: "The answers to moral dilemmas are not lying out there, waiting to be discovered. They reside, like the kingdom of God, within us—the most difficult and inaccessible spot for any discovery and consensus."

NANCY HAEGEL

Tests not the answer

Glencoe, Md.

To the Editors: It is always with some sadness that I read Chester Finn and those who support his proposals for standardized national testing of student performance. As a high school teacher for twenty-five years, I can only marvel at his naiveté. It is twice sad when the president of a fine university like the University of Rochester (Dennis O'Brien in "Sharpen Your No. 2 Pencils," reviewing Finn's *We Must Take Charge,* September 27) is not able to see beyond the gross superficialities that Finn embraces.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of the silliness of the Finn formula for educational excellence lies in your September 27 issue. Frank McConnell's wonderful piece on "Frank O'Malley of Notre Dame" eloquently relates the story of Every student's love affair with education. Two questions: How would Chester Finn hold Frank O'Malley accountable on a standardized test? And, if O'Malley had been on the faculty of the University of Rochester, which standardized test would Dennis O'Brien employ to judge O'Malley and what he taught his students?

GEORGE B. McCENEY

The reviewer replies:

Neither I nor Chester Finn thinks that tests are everything—but they are something. Folks named Finn, O'Brien, and McCeney all *should* have some respect for the Irish system of national school-leaving exams, which do not seem to warp the students or prevent various O'Malleys from succeeding.

DENNIS O'BRIEN

Fagothey as leaven

Birmingham, Ala.

To the Editors: I am disturbed by *Commonweal*'s change of the title of my article [October 11] from "The Leaven" to "Disarming Austin Fagothey."

Jesus' parable of the leaven attacks our perception of the corrupt. What we think is subversive may turn out to be our means of transformation.

Father Austin Fagothey's total war dissertation, which I judged as corrupt, was a transforming agent in the peace lobby at Vatican II. In relation to the total war condemnation he helped shape, Austin Fagothey was the leaven in the leaven. In a profound sense, it was the gentle, rigorously reasoning Austin Fagothey—whose conclusions I found intolerable—who did the disarming.

JAMES W. DOUGLASS

From the editors: Mr. Douglass's letter achieves two purposes. First, it reemphasizes a principal point the author wished to make; second, it serves to remind authors and readers that titles of articles appearing in *Commonweal* (and most other magazines) are usually the work of the editors,

(Continued on page 702)

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COMMONWEAL

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The future of marriage

Marriage is a given of human society. However diverse the bonds expressed by couples or witnessed by communities throughout the world, the union of a woman and a man has been constitutive of marriage's very definition. That we now may need to specify *heterosexual* marriage to distinguish it from the challenge raised by the notion of homosexual marriage will be evidence, for some, of our moral decline; for others, an indicator of moral maturity. However odd and disorienting the notion of homosexual marriage may be, it is important to understand the arguments advanced in its favor (we thank Brent Hartinger for making the case so cogently, pp. 681-83). We believe, however, that it is vital to argue that heterosexual marriage holds and should hold a privileged place in civil society (see Dennis O'Brien, pp. 684-85, and Jean Bethke Elshtain pp. 685-86). It may seem that privileging heterosexual marriage is a covert argument in favor of heterosexuality that implies disrespect for homosexuals as persons or shows a callous disregard for their dilemma in securing a place in our social and political life. But that need not be if the argument is focused on maintaining an understanding of marriage that honors its true social purposes and its foundational role in our political and cultural system.

It is only in our kind of society with its liberal premises and its indispensable regard for individual autonomy that the question of homosexual marriage would be so earnestly pressed in the political arena as well as in some church bodies. That regard increasingly confronts the body politic with the question of what limits a pluralistic democracy can impose on individual actions that are not violent or self-evidently destructive. Sexual conduct is often at the forefront of such debates and attitudes toward homosexuality are foremost among our changing mores.

This past year the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches debated the morality of homosexuality, and struggled over accepting active homosexuals in the ministry. A gay rights bill was approved by a solid majority of California legislators, though vetoed, unexpectedly, by the governor. In Washington, D.C., two homosexuals are suing the city for denying them a marriage license. Hasn't the time come, Brent Hartinger and other proponents argue, for religious and civil society to bestow on homosexual couples the status and protections of legal marriage? Aren't we only encouraging prejudice as well as promiscuity by denying homosexuals the right to marry?

We think more is at stake: the meaning of marriage.

It is perhaps easier for Catholics with an incarnational and sacramental understanding of marriage to see why this is so. Justifying such a prohibition on a political level is more difficult, particularly if one wants also to uphold the values of equality and pluralism.

Hartinger argues that legalizing marriage for homosexuals will result in a greater

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good for a greater number of people, homosexual and heterosexual. After all, "society has a vested interest in stable, committed relationships." If anything, he contends, homosexual couples are remarkably conventional; social recognition of their unions would promote traditional values. Therefore, he concludes, since the state has no compelling interest in prohibiting same-sex marriages, it is punitive and discriminating to deny people equal rights on the basis of sexual orientation.

But it is not discrimination for our laws and mores to maintain a definition of marriage as being a union of one man and one woman. In the legal arena, Supreme Court rulings on Mormon polygamy decided, we think correctly, that: "To permit this [polygamy] would be to make the professed doctrines of religious belief superior to the law of the land, and in effect to permit every citizen to become a law unto himself." Thus even with the fundamental right of religious liberty weighed in the balance, the Court ruled against polygamous marriages. The argument holds *a fortiori* where the claim of discrimination rests on philosophical or ideological premises.

Mr. Hartinger's moral analogy with laws forbidding interracial marriage also falters; such laws were indeed unjust, but they were enacted to help keep blacks in a state of submission and inferiority, *not* to protect marriage as an institution. Marriage is not denied to homosexuals to suppress or oppress them, but because marriage, by its very nature, hallows society's interest in protecting the connection between sexuality and procreation, what Jean Elshtain in her response calls the social goods of the regenerative family.

Advocates may counter that the real moral purpose of marriage resides in a "loving, committed relationship." But with that standard, it is unclear how prohibitions against polygamous marriages, child marriages, group marriages, or other freely chosen unions could be justified. Moreover, if our legal system were to adopt such a subjective criterion, it would risk not merely tolerating but encouraging a variety of voluntary and legal arrangements between consenting adults—prostitution, surrogate motherhood,

"Get yourself some new writers!"

the selling of body parts for transplantation, for example. Granting absolute sovereignty to individual choice in such matters inevitably poses a threat to basic human dignity. Human nature is not simply an arbitrarily willed reality. Not everything that can be done should be done. In our technological age, countless "improvements" threaten the link between the inviolability of the body and the dignity of the human person.

The pluralism that liberalism rightly celebrates cannot rest on such a leveling to individual choice, but must depend on an ordering of values that will preserve a sense of comity and a moral community in whose vitality all citizens have a serious stake, even though not everyone will necessarily consent to its every purpose. We only acquire the confidence to make room for these various differences if our fundamental precepts are secure. Homosexual life has a place in that moral community, a place that has been strengthened by the end to efforts at suppressing it in private life and by antidiscrimination laws in employment, housing, and public services. Some jurisdictions now recognize domestic partnership arrangements for couples, heterosexual or homosexual, living together without benefit of marriage, this to prevent denial of legal protections married persons enjoy by their status.

To redefine the meaning of marriage in order to accommodate a homosexual understanding of it seems both to distort the meaning of homosexuality and, almost certainly, to undermine our ability as a moral community to make and maintain distinctions critical to the meaning of family life. Exercising care for the community, acting in the name of a shared future, is perhaps a more fundamental way of enabling the individual than blessing every individual preference with judicial or legislative approval. "The most profound decisions about justice are not made by individuals as such, but by individuals thinking within and on behalf of institutions," Mary Douglas has written.

To accept some form of moral or teleological equivalence between homosexual and heterosexual acts is to radically alter the centrality of sexual morality in our most basic understanding of the human project. Such a "liberation" can only further erode our most intimate and deeply felt ties to the future and the sacrifices that requires of us. The ethos of marital heterosexuality imposes upon us a sense of participation in a moral project that transcends our own immediate needs and wants. If the experience of the last twenty-five years has taught us anything, it is that human institutions are not infinitely malleable: the fragility of marriage, the permeability of families, and the incidence of haphazard arrangements for the care and rearing of children are there for all to contemplate. By giving each of us a compelling stake in the future, marriage takes the paradoxical energies of sexuality and harnesses them to the greater social good of providing for subsequent generations. Heterosexual marriage turns us back to the regenerative body and confronts us with the mystery of the other and the joys of human creation in a way same-sex marriage cannot. In an age when, from abortion to euthanasia, technology puts greater and greater power over life into our own hands, the ties that bind each of us to the larger human and moral community must be strengthened rather than attenuated.

Can such values be admitted to the public debate? The answer

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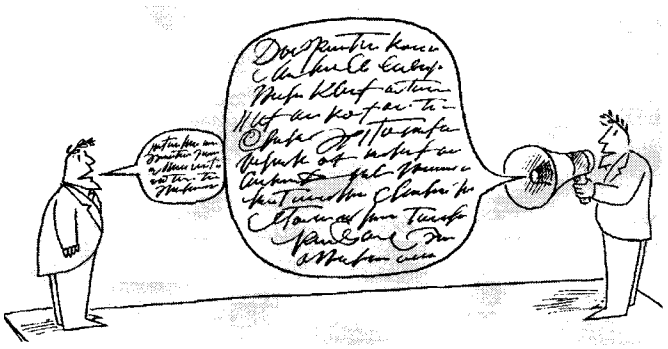

is that we cannot hope to sustain a public life without them. Political philosopher Michael Sandel warns that "a politics that's empty of larger meanings—moral, spiritual meanings, or for that matter, that's empty of any sense of a shared project—is not a democracy that can sustain itself." Pluralism, in other words, can defeat itself by so relativizing all values that the value of pluralism itself cannot be defended.

Finally, it is right, as Jean Elshtain observes, to "privilege" some sexual relationships over others. Society can accommodate alternative visions of family life and childrearing, but it risks moral enervation if it displaces the biological family as its normative value, if it attempts to measure the meaning of all sexual relations by one overrationalized standard. Let us respect and protect homosexuality as a personal value or choice. But let us not as a consequence simply plead neutrality about the value of procreative sexuality. Such a neutral moral measure suggests, falsely, that the human activity of procreation is bereft of any unique meaning. In truth, if we do not safeguard the unconditional demands of family life as a "school for virtue," we risk rationalizing away every human duty and loyalty, including the duty to understand those different from ourselves.

REPORT FROM GUATEMALA

AN HONEST COP

POLITICAL MURDER DIES HARD

Detective Jose Merida Escobar was a member of the Guatemala National Police until he was murdered outside police headquarters on August 9. In September 1990 he and his partner had been assigned to investigate the murder of Myrna Mack, a prominent Guatemalan anthropologist and human rights advocate. An authority on Guatemala's estimated 1 million internal refugees—displaced by the country's three-decade-long civil war—she had been stabbed sixteen times as she left the offices of a progressive think tank on September 11.

The authorities did not take samples from Mack's fingernails—standard procedure in deaths involving a struggle—nor did they dust the area for fingerprints. They did test her blood for alcohol content. Their conclusion: The killing was simply a common crime, perhaps a crime of passion. Escobar and his partner were assigned to write the report endorsing those conclusions.

But Escobar was a good cop—and a thorough one. His investigation uncovered witnesses who testified to continued surveillance of Mack by heavily-armed men dressed in civilian clothes. One witness concluded that the men were from "*alla arriba*"—"up there"—colloquial for Guatemala's feared G-2 Intelligence. In his report, filed September 29, Escobar fingered Noel de Jesus Beteta Alvarez as the killer and concluded that Mack's murder was a systematic operation involving numerous personnel, cars and motorcycles, and automatic weapons. Beteta Alvarez, an ex-soldier, had ties to G-2.

When Escobar's report was publicly issued on November 20, Alvarez's name was nowhere to be found in it, key testimony had been excluded, and no conclusions were drawn as to motive or perpetrators. Under pressure, Escobar's partner endorsed the "sanitized" version. But Escobar couldn't. On July 4, 1991, the name of the presumed assassin was leaked to the press and the government reluctantly issued a warrant for Alvarez's arrest—nine months after his name was first broached. Tipped off far in advance, he is believed to have fled to Los Angeles. "I have signed my death warrant," Escobar told friends as he desperately sought help from human rights groups to leave the country. But on August 9, he was gunned down in broad daylight, fifty meters outside National Police Headquarters. The papers quoted witnesses as seeing four men in a pickup truck with polarized windows racing from the scene.

The story, however, does not end there. On August 26, the National Police declared that they had "broken the case" and apprehended Escobar's killer. What happened, as Rony Ochaeta, director of the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala City, told me recently, is something else. The police detained a man on minor charges and gave him time to memorize a confession to Escobar's murder. Then they videotaped it with two police officers posing as news reporters. On the tape, the supposed killer is cool, calm, and hasn't a mark on him. That would be hard to believe in a similar situation in the U.S. But in Guatemala, where torture is an everyday tool of interrogation, it is inconceivable. The tape was aired on Guatemalan television on August 26-27 by order of the Interior Ministry and the National Police. In his "confession," the man says that he and Escobar robbed a bank three years before and that Escobar cheated him of $5,000 from the take. In addition, Escobar had sexually abused the man's wife, who had subsequently developed ovarian cancer. The man was getting a shoe shine in the plaza outside National Police Headquarters when he saw Escobar emerge from the building. He happened to be carrying a gun a friend had lent him, and, in a fit of rage, he killed Escobar. No politics. Just vengeance. "That was it," Escobar's boss National Police Chief Colonel Mario Enrique Paiz told me. "It was a case of vengeance. The case is closed."

For the Catholic archdiocese, however, the case is anything but closed. It has documented that Escobar's self-confessed "killer" didn't arrive in the capital until August 23—two weeks

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after the slaying. On the day of the murder, the accused was in far northern Chimaltenango. He is not married, and never has been. And because his extrajudicial confession is not admissible in a Guatemalan court, the man will go free. The National Police will say they caught the killer but, alas, the courts let him go.

Merida Escobar's story is unique in one respect. For all their talk about the "honor and the integrity of the Army and the security forces," here the security forces were willing to assassinate one of their own and to pass it off as a common crime. In another sense, however, it is the same old story for Guatemala. In the first eight months of President Jorge Serrano's government, nearly five hundred extrajudicial killings have been documented by the Catholic archdiocese's Human Rights Office. Merida Escobar's is one. U.S. Ambassador Thomas Stroock has roused the ire of conservative Guatemalans by his forthright criticisms of the government on human rights issues. It was the first item President George Bush talked about with the Guatemalan President during Serrano's recent visit to the Oval Office.

Still, Serrano has a problem. His own political party holds barely 20 percent of the seats in Congress and just 13 of 330 mayoral positions. While even Serrano's harshest critics judge him as an honest man of good intentions, all save government circles consider him unable to impose civilian control over the army and the police.

Though Serrano's efforts to control inflation and stabilize the national currency draw kudos from business circles, the standard of living for the 85 percent of Guatemalans who live in poverty has dropped precipitously. Also, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, Guatemala has become a major transshipment point for drugs entering the United States. The army and the security forces provide the protection needed and benefit handsomely.

"The only breathing space that Serrano has is the dialogue for peace," Rony Ochaeta told me, referring to the negotiations taking place in Mexico City between the government and the rebels of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG). "For all the fine speeches and good will, there is a wave of violence selectively targeting possible postwar leaders of the popular movements....[Former President] Vinicio Cerezo was elected in 1985 to bring peace and justice. He had the capacity and didn't use it. He took from us all our hope. The people have lost faith. Curiously, we don't know what we want as a people. We know we don't want a coup."

As for the peace negotiations, prospects are uncertain. The army, despite some dissent within the ranks, is participating in the talks with the aim of essentially negotiating the rebels' surrender. Sources close to the talks joke that "the Guatemalan government will sign anything—on paper." The follow-up is what worries the URNG rebels, who have called for an end to impunity, abolition of forced recruitment into the army and rural civil defense patrols, and the dissolution of the clandestine security apparatus that snuffed out Myrna Mack's and Merida Escobar's lives.

"I want to be clear," URNG commandante Pablo Monsanto

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told me in Mexico City. "We are not fighting to incorporate ourselves into the status quo. We are not trying to solve our—the URNG's—problem by integrating ourselves on generous terms while all else remains unchanged."

The status quo in Guatemala means continued impunity by the security forces. It means a continued division of the country between the few who have the power—and wealth—and the many who hold little of either. And it means honest cops like Jose Merida Escobar put their lives on the line in more ways than one.

PATRICK LACEFIELD

Patrick Lacefield is associate director of the Commission on United States-Latin American Relations in Washington, D.C.

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

SINS OF THE FATHERS

NOTHING PREORDAINED

"The Germans will never forgive us for their having gassed us at Auschwitz." These words of a rabbi, quoted in a recent *New York Times* book review of *The German Comedy* by Peter Schneider, referred to a new form of anti-Semitism, which blames Jews for tarnishing the self-image of their persecutors. As accurate as the psychological observation is, and as ugly as the phenomenon it refers to is, something else can be found in the statement as well. The Germans referred to here are not the Germans who did the gassing, but Germans who identify themselves with them, for reasons involving family and nation. The "us" is not the people who were gassed, but Jews who identify themselves with the victims of the Germans, for reasons of family and nation. I remember reading about an exchange between Joan Baez and a young black woman, who said, "You have been oppressing me for two hundred years." Baez asked how old she was, and then pointed out that she wasn't old enough to have been oppressed for that long.

That really isn't a bad point. Should white Irish Americans pay reparations to black Americans on the grounds that, by virtue (or vice) of their being white they have oppressed black people—even if their ancestors were busy being oppressed by the English, did not arrive in America until 1925, and may never personally have participated in racist structures? Should the children of black lawyers or doctors be given preference over the children of unemployed white assembly-line workers in college admissions? Such worries—and the failure to address them well, as economic times get tough—are responsible, among other factors, for the success of the neo-Nazi candidate for Louisiana governor, David Duke.

I have overheard a lot of arguments that go roughly like this: nationhood and religion are responsible for so much hatred and bloodshed that it would be better to adhere to neither, to see oneself simply as a self, not limited or defined by allegiance to anything else. I have even met people who manage this, who have no religion, who downplay to the point of near-nothingness their religious or ethnic identity—they make white bread look positively daring—in their desire not to be anything in particular. Some people are born into this condition, a new phenomenon. They are the ideal post-Enlightenment products. They will fit well into a society that desires such citizens—but from what basis will they be able to tell us anything we might need to hear, or teach, or heal, or offer stories that could be instructive at any level that we need to know? We need the "us," the identification that makes Germans and Jews see themselves not as individuals only but as people who come from something and know and remember it, with all its pain and complication.

On the other hand, such definitions can be murderously inclusive. I am not doomed to be what my father and grandfather were, if my father was a Nazi and his father an instigator of pogroms. I really did not do these things. It is right for me to insist on that, and to insist that you may not absorb me into their deeds, their hatred, their cowardice. On the same grounds, in other circumstances (if for example I were a direct descendent of Thomas More), I may not claim my ancestor's heroism, courage, or wisdom. I may hope that something was handed on, but can't claim it.

In the same way, you may—perhaps appropriately—fear that something of nazism was handed on in children of Nazis, but you may not assume it. You do have every right to suspect that something was handed on where you encounter defensiveness. This explains in part the weight of wariness black Americans carry when they deal with whites. What black Americans have to deal with is not a suddenly decreed "equality of opportunity," as if that could be made to happen by governmental fiat. Most of the discussions going on about black/white relations now avoid the more troubling issue of class, because we would like to believe that this is not a major issue in America.

But even if it were solved, like the relationship between Jews and Germans, something more than class would be involved here. The very fact that as a white man I—quite accidentally—do not encounter barriers that black people commonly encounter (do not, for example, have cabs routinely pass me by in Manhattan) is relevant. I don't know that this calls for reparations of any sort, or quotas, and I am not sure that it can be solved governmentally; but it is a fact, and collective identities adhere to us whether we like it or not. The complications they involve may not be solved in the ways proposed by conventional liberalism, and conservatives have taken appropriate note of that fact. They also can't be sentimentalized away, as the rhetoric of some of Clarence Thomas's defenders suggested. I'm glad he had a strong grandfather and encouraging nuns. A lot of kids don't; a lot of kids live in places where, as is the case in one part of New

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York City, there is no money for a building, so school is held in a skating rink with teachers who, simply because of the number of students per teacher, have to act like cops at a concert more than teachers in a classroom. Most of these kids are black, and that isn't an accident. As Jonathan Kozol has pointed out, this is one problem that really can be solved by throwing some money at it.

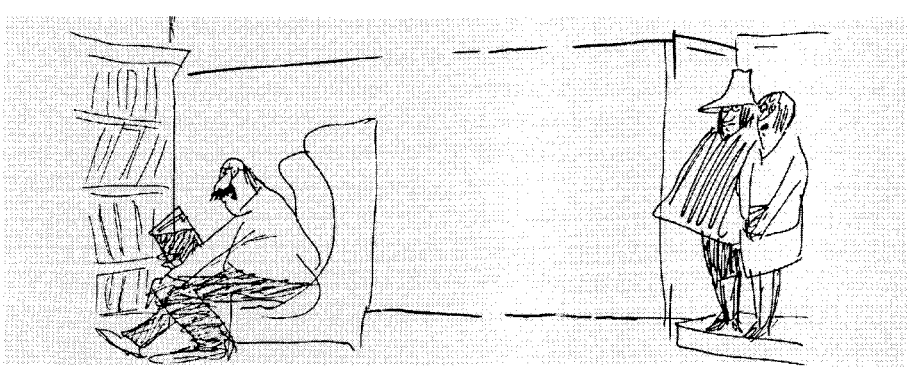
In a recent issue of *Commonweal* (October 11), editor Margaret O'Brien Steinfels argued that a meeting of CORPUS, an association of resigned Roman Catholic priests, was wrong to celebrate a liturgy at which the officiants would be former priests. She was answered by Thomas McCabe, a CORPUS official. Without addressing the particulars of the argument, I think it might help to look at the experience of a church that has known the experience of married priests for all of its history, and has a theological perspective that may help Catholics, who will be forced to examine this question as supplies of priests dwindle.

A married priesthood has not, in my experience as a convert to Orthodox Christianity, meant less pastoral care than I found in Roman Catholicism; in fact, the quality of pastoral care is usually better and more attentive, perhaps because of our smaller parishes...but the smaller parishes are possible because we have more priests per capita than Roman Catholics do. Where such pastorally intimate situations as confession are concerned, my wife and I have found Orthodox practice much more helpful than Catholic practice, precisely because the priests we confess to are married.

In the Orthodox approach to priesthood, marriage must occur before ordination. A person who chooses to marry after ordination is laicized—with no negative connotation attached. If a deacon or priest is widowed (or divorced, an increasing phenomenon) he is expected to become a layperson if he marries again. This isn't an arbitrary canonical regulation but something that Paul says: the bishop—in the early church this was the ordinary pastor, the one who presided—should be the husband of one wife. The implication the church has taken from this is that the marriage should occur before ordination, and Paul makes it clear that the point is that a man's stable family life might indicate a similar stability with regard to the larger community. (The experience of the church is that it seems to.) The priest is the person appointed by the community to do the Eucharist. Originally the bishop was the center of every eucharistic community; later he appointed presbyters to preside in his stead. In all cases, it was an appointment by the church (not a vocation that came from God, independent of a specific community call, or independent of a bishop).

A married priesthood in our time often involves unstable clerical marriages, occasional divorces, and consequently upset parish communities. In my youth, pederast Catholic priests were a problem that was closeted (I encountered such priests, and so did several friends); now it isn't, but it is coming close to bankrupting some dioceses. In Orthodoxy this problem also exists, but on a smaller scale. We haven't and probably won't have the number of scandals that have hit the Catholic church in the U.S. and Canada, but we have had some. In Orthodoxy, celibacy is demanded only of monks and bishops, which narrows the percentage of clergy who are tempted to use a false celibacy as a shield. A married priesthood isn't a cure for priest shortages: there are Orthodox parishes that can't be staffed for want of priests, and many Orthodox parents discourage their sons from becoming priests. A significant number of our priests support themselves, because the communities they serve can't afford to support them full-time. Married priests make more pastoral sense than compulsorily celibate ones, but married priests won't solve all problems—including even the priest shortage—though they would probably go a long way toward helping to alleviate it.

The CORPUS approach, however, seems—from the Orthodox point of view, anyway—a strange one. It sees priesthood as a power or resource that is apparently granted independently of the church (meaning independently of bishops and a real community), a power that inheres, once granted. From the Orthodox point of view, to marry after ordination means that you become a layperson—no problem there. It was or should have been a choice freely taken, both times. The notion that ordination is a right or confers a power, on the other hand, looks pretty strange to us and ought to look pretty strange to Catholics. No one in modern times has forced anyone to be a priest. God, I would argue, didn't call any of these men to priesthood. The church did, in the person of the bishop, and approved them for ordination; and then they chose—often for very good and sound reasons—to move away from the priesthood. They may have wanted to remain priests, but that's another question: the need to be a priest, or the feeling that one has a right to priesthood, is more a pathological than a theological question. I know Orthodox clerics who after the death of a wife or a divorce have been laicized. They are as helpful to their churches as most priests are (and in some cases, a good deal more helpful). Any Orthodox bishop who cares deeply about canon law or Pauline scripture or church tradition would deal with this situation as Catholic bishops have, and should. One priest said to me of a friend of his, who was a priest and married after the death of his wife, while remaining deeply involved in his parish, "He understood that what matters is the chalice, and not who holds it."



"Schyler is keenly aware of history, but he can't do anything about it."

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A CASE FOR GAY MARRIAGE

IN SUPPORT OF LOVING & MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIPS

BRENT HARTINGER

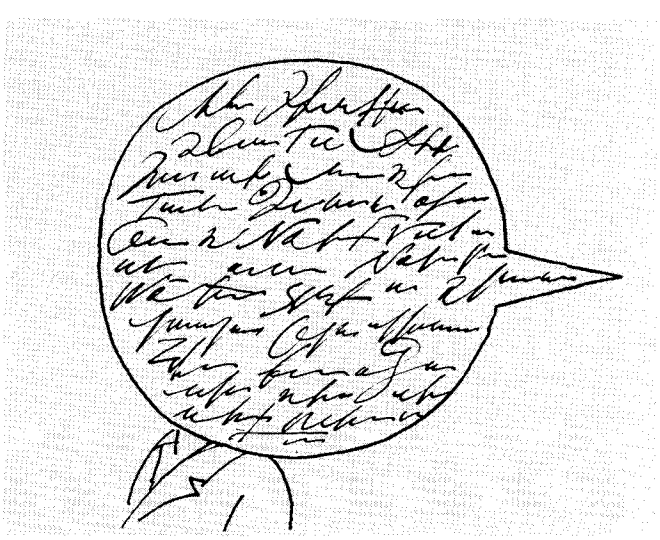
In San Francisco this year, homosexuals won't just be registering for the draft and to vote. In November 1990, voters approved legislation which allows unmarried live-in partners—heterosexual or homosexual—to register themselves as "domestic partners," publicly agreeing to be jointly responsible for basic living expenses. Like a few other cities, including New York and Seattle, San Francisco had already allowed bereavement leave to the domestic partners of municipal employees. But San Francisco lesbians and gays had been trying for eight years to have some form of partnership registration—for symbolic reasons at least—ever since 1982 when then-mayor Diane Feinstein vetoed a similar ordinance. A smattering of other cities provide health benefits to the domestic partners of city employees. In 1989, a New York court ruled that a gay couple is a "family" in that state, at least in regard to their rent-controlled housing (the decision was reaffirmed late last year). And in October of 1989, Denmark became the first industrialized country to permit same-sex unions (since then, one-fifth of all marriages performed there have been homosexual ones).

However sporadic, these represent major victories for gay men and lesbians for whom legal marriage is not an option. Other challenges are coming fast and furious. Two women, Sandra Rovira and Majorie Forlini, lived together in a marriage-like relationship for twelve years—and now after her partner's death, Rovira is suing AT&T, Forlini's employer, for refusing to pay the death benefits the company usually provides surviving spouses. Craig Dean and Patrick Gill, a Washington, D.C., couple, have filed a $1 million discrimination suit against that city for denying them a marriage license and allegedly violating its human rights acts which outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; the city's marriage laws explicitly prohibit polygamous and incestuous marriages, but not same-sex ones.

Legally and financially, much is at stake. Most employee benefit plans—which include health insurance, parental leave, and bereavement leave—extend only to legal spouses. Marriage also allows partners to file joint income taxes, usually saving them money. Social Security can give extra payment to qualified spouses. And assets left from one legal spouse to the other after death are not subject to estate taxes. If a couple splits up, there is the issue of visitation rights for adopted children or offspring conceived by artificial insemination. And then there are issues of jurisprudence (a legal spouse cannot be compelled to testify against his or her partner) and inheritance, tenancy, and conservatorship: pressing concerns for many gays as a result of AIDS.

In terms of numbers alone, a need exists. An estimated 10 percent of the population—about 25 million Americans—is exclusively or predominantly homosexual in sexual orientation, and upwards of 50 percent of the men and about 70 percent of the women are in long-term, committed relationships. A 1990 survey of 1,266 lesbian and gay couples found that 82 percent of the male couples and 75 percent of the female ones share all or part of their incomes.

As a result, many lesbians and gays have fought for "domestic partnership" legislation to extend some marital and family benefits to unmarried couples—cohabitating partners either unwilling or, in the case of homosexuals, unable to marry. In New York City, for example, unmarried municipal workers who have lived with their partners at least a year may register their relationships with the personnel department, attesting to a "close and com-



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mitted" relationship "involving shared responsibilities," and are then entitled to bereavement leave.

But such a prescription is inadequate; the protections and benefits are only a fraction of those resulting from marriage—and are available to only a small percentage of gays in a handful of cities (in the above-mentioned survey, considerably less than 10 percent of lesbian and gay couples were eligible for any form of shared job benefits). Even the concept of "domestic partnership" is seriously flawed. What constitutes a "domestic partner"? Could roommates qualify? A woman and her live-in maid? It could take an array of judicial decision making to find out.

Further, because the benefits of "domestic partnership" are allotted to couples without much legal responsibility—and because the advantages of domestic partnership are necessarily allowed for unmarried heterosexual partners as well as homosexual ones—domestic partnership has the unwanted consequence of weakening traditional marriage. Society has a vested interest in stable, committed relationships—especially, as in the case of most heterosexual couples, when children are concerned. But by eliminating the financial and legal advantages to marriage, domestic partnership dilutes that institution.

Society already has a measure of relational union—it's called marriage, and it's not at all difficult to ascertain: you're either married or you're not.

Yet for unmarried heterosexual couples, marriage is at least an option. Gay couples have no such choice—and society also has an interest in committed, long-lasting relationships even between homosexuals. An estimated 3 to 5 million homosexuals have parented children within heterosexual relationships, and at least 1,000 children were born to lesbian or gay couples in the San Francisco area alone in just the last five years. None of the recent thirty-five studies on homosexual parents has shown that parental sexual orientation has any adverse effect on children (and the children of gays are no more likely to be gay themselves). Surely increased stability in the relationships of lesbians and gay men could only help the gays themselves and their many millions of children.

Some suggest that legal mechanisms already exist by which lesbian and gay couples could create some of the desired protections for their relationships: power-of-attorney agreements, proxies, wills, insurance policies, and joint tenancy arrangements. But even these can provide only a fraction of the benefits of marriage. And such an unwieldy checklist guarantees that many lesbian and gay couples will not employ even those available.

There is a simpler solution. Allow gay civil marriage. And throw the weight of our religious institutions behind such unions.

In 1959, Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving, a mixed-race Virginia couple married in Washington, D.C., pleaded guilty to violating Virginia's ban on interracial marriages. Jeter and Loving were given a suspended jail sentence on the condition that they leave the state. In passing the sentence, the judge said, "Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, Malay, and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangements, there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix." A motion to overturn the decision was denied by two higher Virginia courts until the state's ban on interracial marriage was declared unconstitutional by the United State Supreme Court in 1967. At the time, fifteen other states also had such marital prohibitions.

Clearly, one's sexual orientation is different from one's race. While psychological consensus (and compelling identical and fraternal twin studies) force us to concede that the homosexual *orientation* is not a choice, (nor is it subject to change), homosexual behavior definitely is a choice, very unlike race. Critics maintain that gays can marry—just not to members of their same sex.

But with regard to marriage, whether homosexual behavior is a choice or not is irrelevant, since one's marriage partner is *necessarily* a choice. In 1959, Richard Loving, a white man, could have chosen a different partner to marry other than Mildred Jeter, a black woman; the point is that he did not. The question is whether, in the absence of a compelling state interest, the state should be allowed to supersede the individual's choice.

Some maintain that there are compelling state interests to prohibiting same-sex marriages: that tolerance for gay marriages would open the door for any number of unconventional marital arrangements—group marriage, for example. In fact, most lesbian and gay relationships are probably far more conventional than most people think. In the vast majority of respects, gay relationships closely resemble heterosexual ones—or even actually improve upon them (gay relationships tend to be more egalitarian than heterosexual ones). And in a society where most cities have at least one openly gay bar and sizable gay communities—where lesbians and gays appear regularly on television and in the movies—a committed relationship between two people of the same sex is not nearly the break from convention that a polygamous one is. More important, easing the ban on same-sex marriage would make lesbians and gays, the vast majority of whom have not chosen celibacy, even more likely to live within long-term, committed partnerships. The result would be more people living more conventional lifestyles, not more people living less conventional ones. It's actually a conservative move, not a liberal one.

Similarly, there is little danger that giving legitimacy to gay marriages would undermine the legitimacy of heterosexual ones—cause "the breakdown of the family." Since heterosexuality appears to be at least as immutable as homosexuality (and since there's no evidence that the prevalence of homosexuality increases following the decriminalization of it), there's no chance heterosexuals would opt for the "homosexual alternative." Heterosexual marriage would still be the ulimate social union for heterosexuals. Gay marriage would simply recognize a consistent crosscultural, transhistorical minority and allow that significant minority to also participate in an important social institution. And since marriage licenses are not rationed out, homosexual partnerships wouldn't deny anyone else the privilege.

Indeed, the compelling state interest lies in *permitting* gay

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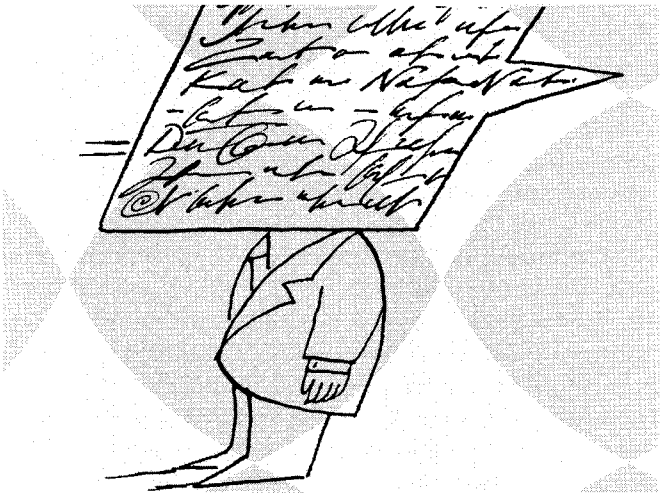

unions. In the wake of AIDS, encouraging gay monogamy is simply rational public health policy. Just as important, gay marriage would reduce the number of closeted gays who marry heterosexual partners, as an estimated 20 percent of all gays do, in an effort to conform to social pressure—but at enormous cost to themselves, their children, and their opposite-sex spouses. It would reduce the atmosphere of ridicule and abuse in which the children of homosexual parents grow up. And it would reduce the number of shameful parents who disown their children or banish their gay teen-agers to lives of crime, prostitution, and drug abuse, or to suicide (psychologists estimate that gay youth comprise up to 30 percent of all teen suicides, and one Seattle study found that a whopping 40 percent of that city's street kids may be lesbian or gay, most having run away or been expelled from intolerant homes). Gay marriage wouldn't weaken the family; it would *strengthen* it.

The unprecedented social legitimacy given gay partnerships—and homosexuality in general—would have other societal benefits as well: it would dramatically reduce the widespread housing and job discrimination, and verbal and physical violence experienced by most lesbians and gays, clear moral and social evils.

Of course, legal and religious gay marriage wouldn't, as some writers claim, "celebrate" or be "an endorsement" of homosexual sexual behavior—any more than heterosexual marriage celebrates heterosexual sex or endorses it; gay marriage would celebrate the loving, committed relationship between two individuals, a relationship in which sexual behavior is one small part. Still, the legalization of gay marriage, while not making homosexual sexual behavior any more prevalent, would remove much of the stigma concerning such behavior, at least that which takes place within the confines of "marriage." And if the church sanctions such unions, a further, moral legitimacy will be granted. In short, regardless of the potential societal gains, should society and the church reserve a centuries-old moral stand that condemns homosexual sexual behavior?

We have no choice; the premises upon which the moral stand are based have changed. Science now acknowledges the existence of a homosexual sexual *orientation*, like heterosexuality, a fundamental affectional predisposition. Unlike specific behaviors of, say, rape or incest, a homosexual's sexual behavior is the logical expression of his or her most basic, unchangeable sexual make-up. And unlike rape and incest, necessarily manifestations of destruction and abuse, sexual behavior resulting from one's sexual orientation can be an expression of love and unity (it is the complete denial of this love—indeed, an unsettling preoccupation with genital activity—that make the inflammatory comparisons of homosexual sex to rape, incest, and alcoholism so frustrating for lesbians and gays).

Moral condemnation of homosexual sexual behavior is often founded on the belief that sex and marriage are—and should be—inexorably linked with child-rearing; because lesbians and gay men are physiologically incapable of creating children alone, all such sexual behavior is deemed immoral—and gays are considered unsuitable to the institution of marriage. But since moral sanction is not withheld from infertile couples or those who intend to remain childless, this standard is clearly being inconsistently—and unfairly—applied.

Some cite the promiscuity of some male gays as if this is an indication that all homosexuals are incapable or undeserving of marriage. But this standard is also inconsistently applied; it has never been seriously suggested that the existence of promiscuous heterosexuals invalidate all heterosexuals from the privilege of marriage. And if homosexuals are more likely than heterosexuals to be promiscuous—and if continual, harsh condemnation hasn't altered that fact—the sensible solution would seem to be to try to lure gays back to the monogamous fold by providing efforts in that direction with some measure of respect and social support: something gay marriage would definitely provide.

Human beings are sexual creatures. It is simply not logical to say, as the church does, that while one's basic sexual outlook is neither chosen nor sinful, any activity taken as a result of that orientation is. One must then ask exactly where does the sin of "activity" begin anyway? Hugging a person of the same sex? Kissing? Same-sex sexual fantasy? Even apart from the practical impossibilities, what about the ramifications of such an attempt? How does the homosexual adolescent formulate self-esteem while being told that *any* expression of his or her sexuality *ever* is unacceptable—or downright evil? The priest chooses celibacy (asexuality isn't required), but this *is* a choice—one made well after adolescence.

Cultural condemnations and biblical prohibitions of (usually male) homosexual behavior were founded upon an incomplete understanding of human sexuality. To grant the existence of a homosexual orientation requires that there be some acceptable expression of it. Of course, there's no reason why lesbians and gays should be granted moral leniency over heterosexuals—which is why perhaps the most acceptable expression of same-sex sexuality should be within the context of a government sanctioned, religiously blessed marriage. But before we can talk about the proper way to get two brides or two grooms down a single church aisle, we have to first show there's an aisle wide enough to accommodate them.

(Comments continued on next page)

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AGAINST GAY MARRIAGE—I

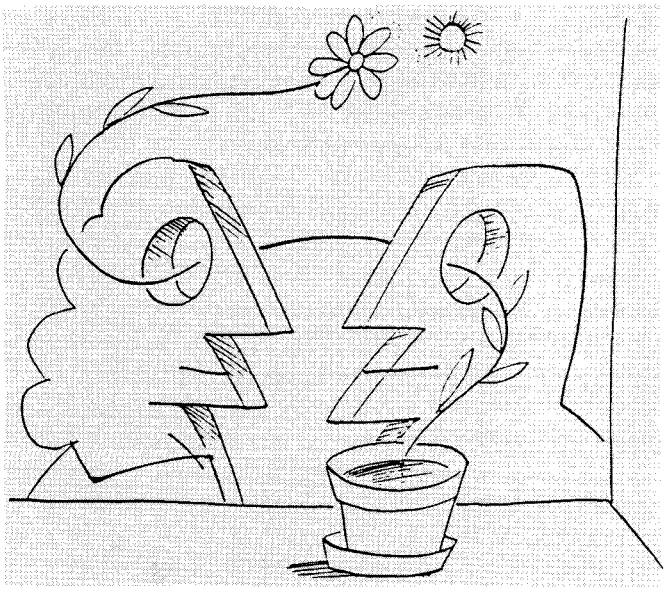
WHAT HETEROSEXUALITY MEANS

My firmest conviction on this debate is that it will end with no conviction. To reach some common view would require an agreement on the meaning of *marriage*—no easy subject; an agreement on whether homosexuality has a meaning—or is it just a natural fact; finally, we would have to find a tone of "sexual wisdom" for the discussion—we are usually too passionate about our passions for wise dispassion.

The very day that *Commonweal* asked me to comment on the subject, I happened to read a personality squib in the local paper about the movie actors Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn. It seems that they are "together" after previous unhappy marriages. They now have a four-year-old son and they would consider marriage if their current arrangement proved difficult to the youngster. Since Hollywood is usually the avant-garde of the culture, it may be that marriage of any kind is a charming anachronism. I assume that the reluctance to enter marriage is that it destroys the honesty and commitment of "true love." Genuine commitment does not need the sanctions of judge or priest. In fact, it shows a weakening of ardor to rest fidelity on formality.

I have no doubt that there are deep and abiding homosexual commitments. What would formal marriage add? Legal marriages do help in divorce proceedings because there is a known system for dissolution and disposition of claims. If legal rights are an issue, they can, of course, be settled by (non-marriage) civil contracts. Should Kurt and Goldie break up this side of marriage, there are "palimony" settlements and similar suits have been brought for homosexual partnerships.

If the sole meaning of "marriage" is legal, then marriage of any sex may become a matter of "indifference." Perhaps truly loving couples should be as "indifferent" to marriage as our Hollywood pair. That there have been homosexual palimony cases would suggest that the law already brings homosexual partners into some sort of "coupled" network of legal restriction. It seems a short step from palimony to matrimony.



If there is an *issue* regarding homosexual marriage, it must rest on some deeper political or "religious" concerns. I do not mean what the newspapers think of as "political": who has the clout to carry the day. I am interested in the basic values of the American *polis*. What does our society express about itself and the human condition through its sanctioned institutions?

One might believe that the American *polis* avoids deep value issues; America is a debating society of opposing philosophies and life styles. Arguments are settled, if necessary or at all, by clout not cultural commitment. On the other hand, it is doubtful that any *polis* can exist at all without a cultural sense, however suppressed. American democracy rests on a powerful set of assumptions about human nature and society which legitimate the character of its institutions. Would homosexual marriage harmonize with our underlying values? I am not certain I can answer that question, but it is worth pointing out that "nonnormal" marriages have previously received constitutional scrutiny. The most famous are "the Mormon cases" which ruled on the legitimacy of polygamy (as a religiously protected right.) The Supreme Court struck down polygamous marriage in part on *democratic* grounds. "Polygamy leads to the patriarchal principle...which, when applied to large communities, fetters the people in stationary despotism, while that principle cannot long exist in connection with monogamy" *Reynolds* v. *United States* 98 US 145 (1879).

I am not overwhelmed by the sociology of the Court's opinion, but the justices were correct in attempting to connect marriage customs with the deeper values of the society. If homosexual marriage were to be seriously advanced, similar large concepts should be brought into play.

Are there potential problems for the *polis* if homosexual marriage becomes a legally sanctioned institution? There are some obvious social concerns. Heterosexual arrangements remain the mainstay for creating the next generation—which is not an incidental issue for any continuing social body. Surrounding heterosexual arrangements with political blessing and legal structures could be judged to have special social utility on that ground alone. Giving heterosexual marriage a positive place in the legal structure does not, however, imply that homosexual relations need suffer from negative legal stricture. What consenting adults do, and so forth — but the state is not obliged to bless every bedroom. (The Athenian *polis*, while it practiced a form of sanctioned homosexuality, did not amalgamate that practice to marriage.)

A *religious* position on homosexual marriage would go beyond the merely legal and the larger political values. (I believe that homosexuality should not be discussed as a straightforward *moral* issue; *moral* issues generally deal with specific acts but the concern here is a life choice. The church has thought traditionally that a religiously celibate life choice was more exalted than marriage. For all that, marriage did not thus become "immoral.")

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Is the *meaning of marriage* (as religious sacrament) consonant with *the meaning of homosexuality*? The latter meaning may be even less recoverable than the former. To the extent that superficial accounts of homosexuality treat it as a direct expression of a biologically determined appetite, they displace it from the web of cultural development that would assay the worth of homosexual life patterns. If all there is to homosexuality (or heterosexuality) is natural determinism, we could remove it from the human spiritual agenda.

I would like to believe that sex is a human artifact for all that it has a biological base. (Human eating habits are not just feeding behavior. The prevalence of fantasy in sex certainly suggests heavy human seasoning of an essential appetite.) Assuming that sex has a human meaning, it seems plausible that homosexual life patterns differ from heterosexual if for no other reason than that male bodies and female bodies are different. If we were only accidentally related to our bodies (angels in disguise, ghosts in a machine), then how these mechanisms got sexual kicks might not *fundamentally* invade our sense of person and human value. *Playboy* and Puritanism both assume the triviality of bodies; they are for playful/sinful distraction only. Catholics seem more stuck with incarnation—and somewhere along that line would be a Catholic answer to the question posed.

I am no fan at all of the "natural law" arguments about procreative sexuality as presented in *Humanae vitae*. These arguments assume that one can read the moral law off the book of nature. Social Darwinists argued that because humans are naturally aggressive, war was morally desirable. (The same mistake occurs when someone argues from a natural urge for hetero/homosexuality to the moral obligation to carry forward the urge.) But for all that nature gives no dogmas, nature presents an ur-text for human meaning. Heterosexual marriage is a deep story developed from the ur-text of genital biology.

What difference could there possibly be in homosexual relations? Well, perhaps homosexual relations are better sex. After all, one knows one's own sex's response better than the heterosexual response. "It takes one to know one!" (As Oscar Wilde said about masturbation: "cleaner, more efficient, and you meet a better class of people.") The sexiness of homosexuality may or may not be the case, but I believe that reflection on hetero/homosexual embodiments would reveal quite different erotic story lines. It seems eminently plausible that bedding with an other (strange?) sex is as different as travel abroad can be from staying at home.

One could conclude that the homosexual story line was valuable—perhaps more valuable than the heterosexual. But not all things are possible in either variation. There are distinct spiritual problems with homosexual "marriage" in the Jewish and Christian traditions. Franz Rosenzweig states a deep truth when he attempts to explicate Jewish "faith": "the belief of the Jew is not the content of a testimony, but rather the product of reproduction. The Jew, engendered a Jew, attests his belief by continuing to procreate the Jewish people."

Underneath all the heated argument about artificial contraception, abortion, population control, family planning and the lot, the traditional Jewish *mitzvah* for procreation expresses human solidarity with a Creator God. The Christian claim for an embodied God moves in the same spiritual territory. (I do not imply that family size scales one up in blessedness.)

Kierkegaard regarded marriage as spirit's proper synthesis of recollection and hope. Without getting into deep theological water, it is certainly the case that heterosexual marriage normally carries with it the meaning of recollection and hope. Normative heterosexual marriage recollects parents in the act of parenting and literally embodies hope in the bringing forth of children. Homosexuals may, of course, recall parents and be hopeful for the future but they do not, of course, embody a family history. In so far as these Judaic faiths are not finally enacted in the realm of attitudes, they seem destined to give a special place to embodiment. Procreative "marriage" seems to me to be a special and irreplaceable central symbol of the tradition.

DENNIS O'BRIEN

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AGAINST GAY MARRIAGE—II

ACCEPTING LIMITS

Every society embraces an image of a body politic. This complex symbolism incorporates visions and reflections on who is inside and who is outside; on what counts as order and disorder; on what is cherished and what is despised. This imagery is fluid but not, I will argue, entirely up for grabs. For without some continuity in our imagery and concern, we confront a deepening nihilism. In a world of ever-more transgressive enthusiasms, the individual—the self—is more, not less, in thrall to whatever may be the reigning ethos. Ours is a culture whose reigning ethic is surely individualism and freedom. Great and good things have come from this stress on freedom and from the insistence that there are things that cannot and must not be done for me and to me in the name of some overarching collective. It is, therefore, unsurprising that anything that comes before us in the name of "rights" and "freedom" enjoys a *prima facie* power, something akin to political grace.

But perhaps we have reached the breaking point. When Madonna proclaims, in all sincerity, that mock masturbation before tens of thousands is "freedom of expression" on a par, presumably, with the right to petition, assemble, and protest, something seems a bit out of whack—distorted, quirky, not-quite-right. I thought about this sort of thing a lot when I listened to the stories of the "Mothers of the Disappeared" in Argentina and to their invocation of the language of "human rights" as a fundamental immunity—the right not to be tortured and "disappeared." I don't believe there is a slippery slope from queasiness at, if not repudiation of, public sexual acts for profit, orchestrated

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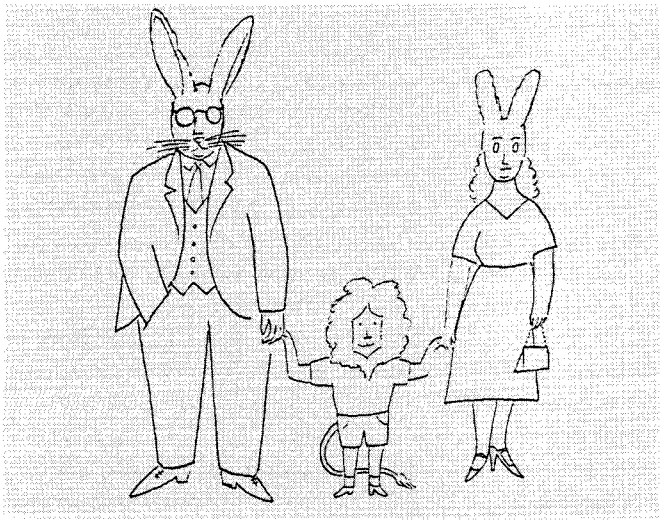
masturbation, say, and putting free speech as a fundamental right of free citizens in peril. I don't think the body politic has to be nude and sexually voracious—getting, consuming, demanding pleasure. That is a symbolism that courts nihilism and privatism (however publicly it may be trumpeted) because it repudiates intergenerational, familial, and communal contexts and believes history and tradition are useful only to be trashed. Our culture panders to what social critic John O'Neill calls the "libidinal body," the body that titillates and ravishes and is best embodied as young, thin, antimaternal, calculating, and disconnected. Make no mistake about it: much of the move to imagery of the entitled self and the aspirations to which it gives rise are specifically, deeply, and troublingly antinatal—hostile to the regenerative female body and to the symbolism of social regeneration to which this body is necessarily linked and has, historically, given rise.

Don't get me wrong: not every female body must be a regenerative body. At stake here is not mandating and coercing the lives of individuals but pondering the fate of a society that, more and more, repudiates generativity as an animating image in favor of aspiration without limit of the contractual and "wanting" self. One symbol and reality of the latter is the search for intrusive intervention in human reproducing coming from those able to command the resources of genetic engineers and medical reproduction experts, also, therefore, those who have more clout over what gets lifted up as our culture's dominant sense of itself. One finds more and more the demand that babies can and must be made whenever the want is there. This demandingness, this transformation of human procreation into a technical operation, promotes a project Oliver O'Donovan calls "scientific self-transcendence." The technologizing of birth is antiregenerative, linked as it is to a refusal to accept any natural limits. What technology "can do," and the law permits, we seem ready to embrace. Our ethics rushes to catch up with the rampant rush of our forged and incited desires.

These brief reflections are needed to frame my equally brief comments on the legality, or not, of homosexual marriage. I have long favored domestic partnership possibilities—ways to regularize and stabilize commitments and relationships. But marriage is not, and never has been, primarily about two people—it is and always has been about the possibility of generativity. Although in any given instance, a marriage might not have led to the raising of a family, whether through choice or often unhappy recognition of, and final reconciliation to, the infertility of one or another spouse, the symbolism of marriage-family as social regenesis is fused in our centuries-old experience with marriage ritual, regulation, and persistence.



The point of criticism and contention runs: in defending the family as framed within a horizon of intergenerationality, one privileges a restrictive ideal of sexual and intimate relations. There are within our society, as I already noted, those who believe this society can and should stay equally open to all alternative arrangements, treating "life-styles" as so many identical peas in a pod. To be sure, families in modernity coexist with those who live another way, whether heterosexual and homosexual unions that are by choice or by definition childless; communalists who diminish individual parental authority in favor of the preeminence of the group; and so on.

But the recognition and acceptance of plural possibilities does not mean each alternative is equal to every other with reference to specific social goods. No social order has ever existed that did not endorse certain activities and practices as preferable to others. Ethically responsible challenges to our terms of exclusion and inclusion push toward a loosening but not a wholesale negation in our normative endorsement of intergenerational family life. Those excluded by, or who exclude themselves from, the familial intergenerational ideal, should not be denied social space for their own practices. And it is possible that if what were at stake were, say, seeking out and identifying those creations of self that enhance an aesthetic construction of life and sensibility, the romantic bohemian or rebel would get higher marks than the Smith family of Remont, Nebraska. Nevertheless, we should be cautious about going too far in the direction of a wholly untrammeled pluralism lest we become so vapid that we are no longer capable of distinguishing between the moral weightiness of, say, polishing one's Porsche and sitting up all night with an ill child. The intergenerational family, as symbolism of social regenesis, as tough and compelling reality, as defining moral norm, remains central and critical in nurturing recognitions of human frailty, mortality, and finitude and in inculcating moral limits and constraints. To resolve the untidiness of our public and private relations by either reaffirming unambiguously a set of unitary, authoritative norms or eliminating all such norms as arbitrary is to jeopardize the social goods that democratic and familial authority, paradoxical in relation to one another, promise—to men and women as parents and citizens and to their children.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

Jean Bethke Elshtain is Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University. Her most recent book is Power Trips and Other Journeys. *Several paragraphs in this piece are drawn from her essay, "The Family and Civic Life," which appears in* Power Trips and Other Journeys *as well as in* Rebuilding the Nest.

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PULLING STRINGS

'RADIANT CITY' & 'CIVILIZATION'

Theodora Skipitares's *The Radiant City* at the American Place Theatre, the story of the building of a not-so-radiant city, begins in the ice age, but moves quickly, by way of projected maps (not enough maps, said a fellow playgoer who works at Hammond), to the founding and the uglification of New York City. A barely animated scene out of Jacob A. Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* shows the brutality of tenement living, but with the telescoping of time characteristic of the piece we move abruptly to Le Corbusier and the promise of the radiant city. The blemish on the promise can be heard in one sentence of the quotation from the celebrated city planner/architect, in which he indicates that the building of the city must begin with moving the people out. On this note, a new visionary arrives, Robert Moses, who will dominate the rest of the evening. Even the scenes—like "Traffic," which opens part 2—in which the city and its problems (or its pleasures: "This Is Jones Beach") are the central focus have the hovering Moses just offstage. Most of the time he is onstage in one of his puppet forms, and his voice, always redolent with idealism, echoes all through the piece. He is the practical dreamer who knows how to manipulate the political hacks in Albany; in *The Radiant City* only the corrupt grace the state government. Without facing the vulgarity of the election process, Moses garners one appointive position after another, solidifying the power to remake the city to the image he carries in his mind.

The Moses we get is the revisionist one of Robert Caro's biography. He talks of parks for people, but means some of the people; his suspicion of blacks leads him to devise ways to keep them from using Jones Beach. He sees the automobile as necessary to the growth of a great city and devises a road and bridge system that will strangle the city by giving birth to ever more automobiles. He ceases to hear the voice of the people—if he ever heard it—and dismisses as whiners the citizens who do not want to see their neighborhoods destroyed to make way for the latest Moses project. He eventually meets his match—the Rockefeller brothers, finance, and politics—and dwindles to human size again, ending with only the World's Fair at Flushing Meadow to plan. And so *The Radiant City* ends, too—not so much in a firm statement as in anticlimactic tapering off. There is no doubt about Skipitares's satiric intentions here, but why, after all these years, go after Robert Moses? There would seem to be two possible reasons: as a warning against current planners and—more ambitious—as a cautionary tale on the dangers of idealism. Neither of these quite comes through. What you have in *The Radiant City* is a collection of comments on the man and the city which become opportunities for Skipitares's inventive designs.

(Continued on page 692)

TOWARDS A SOCIETY THAT SERVES ITS PEOPLE:
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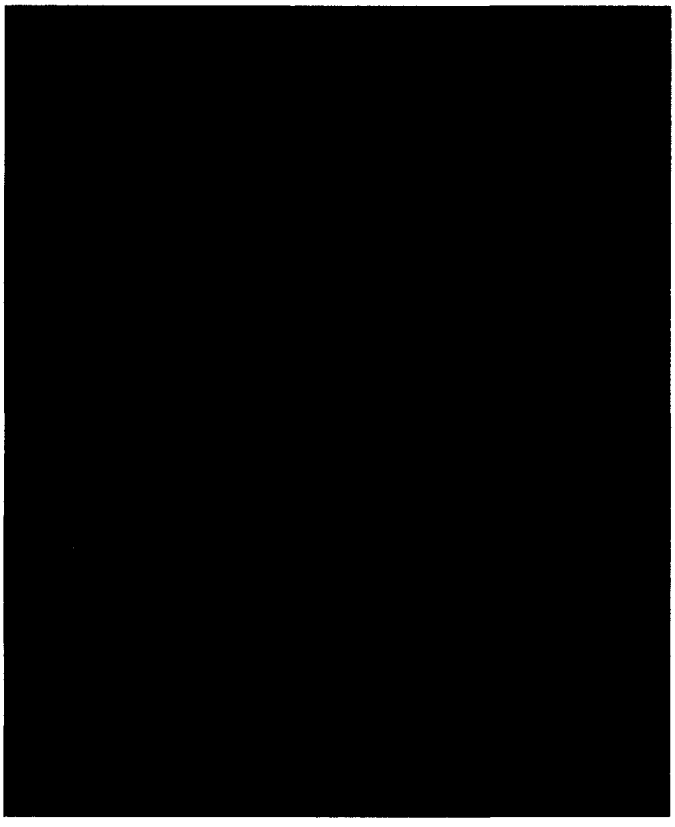

Books for Children and Young Adults

The following titles have been selected from among the many published during 1988-1991 to cover a wide range of ages, interests, and readability. Those books have been listed which seem best to portray relationships among people of different origins, races, and religions, and which depict their varied backgrounds. The list is the result of agreement by a committee of experts in the field of literature for children and young adults. The following selection from the complete list is presented by the publishers named below.

Animal Dreams, *by Barbara Kingsolver. HarperCollins, 1990. $21.95*

A medical student changes her attitude toward family, tradition, and life after she drops out of school, returns home to teach biology, falls in love with a handsome Apache, and discovers a local ecological disaster. (14 and up)

Breaking the Chains: African-American Slave Resistance, *by William Loren Katz. Atheneum, 1990. $14.95*

This fascinating story of bravery, endurance, and frequent revolt puts to rest the myth that slaves were happy and rarely rebelled. (12 and up)

The Cat Who Escaped from Steerage: A Bubbemeiser, *by Evelyn Wilde Mayerson. Scribner's, 1990. $11.95*

The pet which Chanah smuggles aboard ship leads her family into unexpected adventures during their journey from Poland to America in 1910. (8 to 10)

The Chalk Doll, *by Charlotte Pomerantz. Illustrated by Frane Lessac. HarperCollins, 1989. $12.95*

A childhood memory of Jamaica and a very special doll. (5 to 8)

Coconut Kind of Day: Island Poems, *by Lynn Joseph. Illustrated by Sandra Speidel. Lothrop Lee & Shepard, 1990. $13.95*

Caribbean rhythms vibrate through this original collection of colorfully illustrated poetry. (5 to 8)

Code Name Kris, *by Carol Matas. Scribner's, 1990. $12.95*

Teen-ager Jesper joins the Danish underground to fight the Nazis and finds the courage and strength to engage in sabotage and help the persecuted. (12 and up)

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Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life, *by Roger Daniels. HarperCollins, 1990. $29.95*

This thorough history of immigration to the United States, beginning with Columbus, is complete with statistics, excellent photographs, and a readable narrative populated with real people. (14 and up)

A Couple of Kooks and Other Stories about Love, *by Cynthia Rylant. Orchard Books: Watts, 1990. $13.95*

Eight short stories explore love and romance for special people at all stages of life. (12 and up)

Cousins, *by Virginia Hamilton, Philomel Books, 1990. $14.95*

Rebellious Cammy resents her perfect cousin Patty Ann until a tragedy puts things into perspective. (10 and up)

Dawn Rider, *by Jan Hudson, Philomel Books, 1990. $14.95*

Based on the written records of the Blackfoot Nation that occupied Montana and Canada in the 18th century, this is the story of a girl who sees how the coming of the horse will change her people. Filled with details about Blackfoot life, the book presents young people with a heroine from a distant culture. (10 and up)

The Day of Ahmed's Secret, *by Florence Perry Heide and Judith Heide Gillaland. Illustrated by Ted Lewin. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1990. $13.95*

As Ahmed's workday takes him through bustling Cairo, he looks forward to sharing his accomplishments with his family. (5 to 8)

The Day that Elvis Came to Town, *by Jan Marino. Little Brown, 1991. $14.95*

Wanda hopes the glamorous jazz singer boarding in her home will introduce her to Elvis Presley, with whom the woman went to school. This novel of racism, alcoholism, and memorable characters is set in the South in the 1960s. (12 and up)

Desmond Tutu, *by Dennis Wepman. Watts, 1989. $13.95*

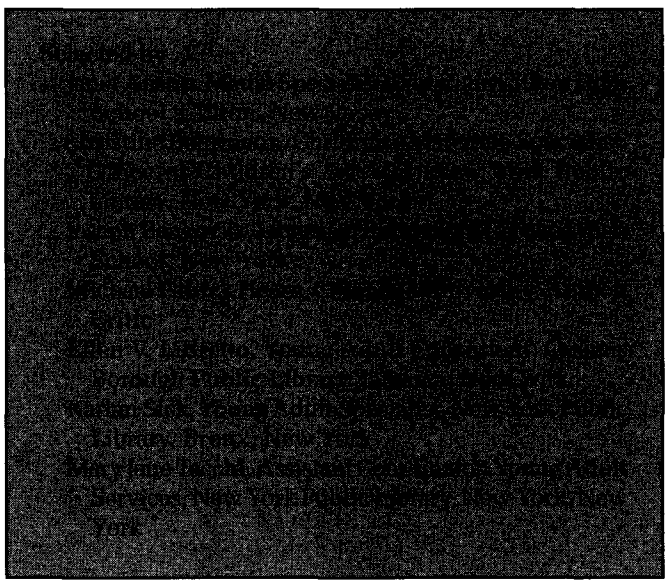
Archbishop Tutu's life is interwoven with the political history of South Africa. (12 and up)

El Chino, *by Allen Say. Houghton Mifflin, 1990. $14.95*

Paintings recreate the mood of old photographs in this biography of a Chinese-American who grew up to become a bullfighter in Spain. (5 to 8)

Fast Talk on a Slow Track, *by Rita Williams-Garcia. Lodestar Books, 1991. $14.95*

A powerful, realistic, and humorous novel about an 18-year-old black student's self-discovery in a summer program for incoming minority students at Princeton. (12 and up)



The Flawed Glass, *by Ian Strachan. Little Brown, 1990. $14.95*

Shona, a severely disabled teen living on a Scottish island, is rescued from her isolation when a sensitive American boy teaches her to use his computer to communicate. (12 and up)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *by Russell Freedman. Clarion Books, 1990. $16.95*

Carefully selected photographs and a well researched and highly readable text tell the story of an extraordinary and controversial man during the Depression and World War II. (10 and up)

A Gathering of Flowers: Stories about Being Young in America, *by Joyce Carol Thomas, HarperCollins, 1990. $14.98*

Eleven authors from different backgrounds tell of growing up. Many of the cultures that make up modern America are represented in tales of childhood, family, hope, and faith. (12 and up)

Home Place, *by Crescent Dragonwagon. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkey. Macmillan, 1990. $14.95*

Every year, when the daffodils bloom, a family searches the ruins of an old house in the woods and dreams of the people who once lived there. Haunting translucent watercolors bring the past vividly back to life. (6 to 8)

Jamaica Tag-Along, *by Juanita Havill. Illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien. Houghton Mifflin, 1989. $4.95*

Jamaica, who likes to follow her big brother around, learns that big kids don't like to be bothered by little kids. (4 to 8)

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Last Summer with Maizon, *by Jacqueline Woodson. Delacorte, 1990. $13.95*

Despite the changes and hardships in their lives, it's "Margaret and Maizon: friends forever!" The story about two African-American girls is set in present-day Brooklyn. (10 and up)

Lee Ann: The Story of a Vietnamese-American Girl, *by Tricia Brown. Putnam, 1991. $14.95*

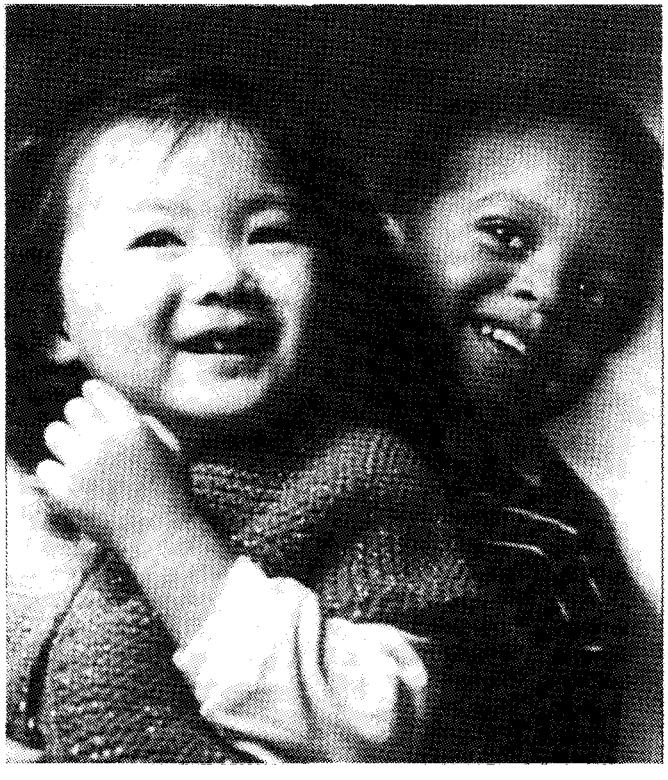
Depicting a co-existence (not a clash) of cultures, this true story picture book is about a Vietnamese girl who lives an "American" life, but keeps Vietnamese traditions in her home. (8 to 10)

Life Doesn't Frighten Me at All, *by John Agard. Henry Holt & Co., 1990. $14.95*

A collection of poems celebrating life, assembled by a Guyanese poet and writer, proves that poets can be "man or woman, black or white, old or young...from all sorts of cultures...and all streams of life." Included are Maya Angelou, W.B. Yeats, Attila the Stockbroker, and many more. (12 and up)

Maniac Magee, *by Jerry Spinelli. Little Brown, 1990. $12.95*

Jeffrey Magee's identity comes from his wild side. But there is more to him than his swagger. This comic novel about a boy whose parents were killed in a trolley crash is entertaining and poignant. (10 to 14)



Michael, *by Tony Bradman. Illustrated by Tony Ross. Macmillan, 1990. $13.95*

No one understands Michael until the little misfit proves his worth by building a rocket ship. He wasn't just daydreaming but thinking all along! (3 to 6)

The Middle of Somewhere: A Story of South Africa, *by Sheila Gordon. Orchard, 1990. $13.95*

A nine-year-old black girl and her family fight the forced evacuation from their homes to make way for a white suburb. The story takes place in the turbulent days surrounding the release of Nelson Mandela. (10 and up)

New Kids on the Block: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens, *by Janet Bode. Franklin Watts, 1989. $12.90*

Eleven young immigrants tell their own coming-to-America stories. Their words are compelling, touching, and mature beyond their years as they describe their escape from war, poverty, and repression to carve out new lives in a not always perfect new world. (12 and up)

Onion Tears, *by Diana Kidd. Orchard Books, 1989. $12.95*

Nam-Huong is a Vietnamese girl haunted by the terrors of the war she saw in her childhood. She must learn peace, love, friendship, and security in her new home while living with the ghosts of her past. (8 to 10)

The Orphan Boy, *by Tolowa M. Mollel. Illustrated by Paul Morin. Clarion, 1990. $14.95*

Curiosity gets the better of an old man when he disregards a warning not to uncover the source of his son's secret powers. The retelling of this African legend is beautifully illustrated with scenes of the life and landscape of the Massai of Kenya and Tanzania. (5 to 8)

Peace Begins with You, *by Katherine Scholes. Illustrated by Robert Ingpen. Little Brown/Sierra Club, 1990. $10.95*

The concept of peace—what it is and what can destroy it—is introduced to very young children. (5 to 8)

People of the Breaking Day, *by Marcia Sewall. Atheneum, 1990. $14.95*

Member of the Wampanoags, the Native Americans encountered by the Pilgrims, describe their beliefs and daily lives. Beautifully illustrated in pastels. (8 to 12)

Rice without Rain, *by Minfong Ho. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1990. $12.95*

In rural Thailand, 17-year-old Jinda's family struggles to survive. Visitors from the city bring a culture that could change centuries-old tradition. The author is the recipient of an award from the Council on Interracial Books for Children. (12 and up)

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Saturnalia, *by Paul Fleischman. HarperCollins, 1990. $12.95*

The many sides of Boston in 1681 are shown through the story of William, a young Indian captive turned printer's apprentice, who searches for his brother and his past. (10 and up)

Sorrow's Kitchen: The Life and Folklore of Zora Neale Hurston, *by Mary E. Lyons. Scribners, 1990. $13.95*

Describes the life and work of the prolific black author of stories, plays, essays, articles, and recorder of black folklore who was active in the Harlem Renaissance. (12 and up)

Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World, *by Paul Yee. Paintings by Simon Ng. Macmillan, 1990. $14.95*

Haunting illustrations accompany eight original stories about the Chinese immigrant experience in North America. (10 and up)

Two Short and One Long, *by Nina Ring Aamundsen. Houghton Mifflin, 1990. $13.95*

Jonas and Einar's friendship is strained by Einar's secrecy about his past and by the arrival of an Afghan boy in the neighborhood. Batchelder Award Honor Book. (8 to 12)

We Have AIDS, *by Elaine Landau. Watts, 1990. $12.95*

The personal accounts of nine children with AIDS reveal their families' reactions, searches for medical treatments, and hopes for a cure. (12 and up)

The Week the World Heard Gallaudet, *by Jack R. Gannon. Gallaudet University Press, 1989. $19.95*

A record in text and color photos of the historic week when deaf students declared their right to have a deaf president. (12 and up)

What Would We Do without You? A Guide to Volunteer Activities for Kids, *by Kathy Henderson. Betterway Publications, 1990. $6.95*

A how-to book for teen-agers who want to help those less fortunate. It covers how to: assess their interests and talents; handle applications and interviews; find groups that need them; and get more information. (12 and up)

When I Am Old with You, *by Angela Johnson. Pictures by David Soman. Orchard, 1990. $14.95*

The companionship between a child and his grandfather is lovingly depicted in this gentle portrait of an African-American family. (5 to 8)

White Peak Farm, *by Berlie Doherty. Orchard, 1990. $12.95*

Teen-aged Jeannie loves her family's farm in England and assumes life will always go on in the same way. But love, death, and a career bring inevitable changes. (12 and up)

A Woman of Her Tribe, *by Margaret A. Robinson. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990. $12.95*

Annette, half English, half Nootka Indian, must decide how to reconcile the ways of her Indian heritage learned in rural Canada with her new life after her family moves to modern Victoria. (12 and up)

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(Continued from page 687)

Two singers/readers at stage right provide the narrative for the piece. They deliver the pertinent quotations and comments, and sing the music of Christopher Thall and the relentlessly repetitive lyrics of Andrea Balis. But the artistic point of the work lies in Skipitares's conceptions. She uses life-size puppets, animated statues, dancing buildings, mechanical devices. Moses, for instance, appears in many forms, most interestingly as a talking head floating in a bubble over the action, least effectively in the giant head, like a fallen statue of Lenin, that looks good on posters and the *Playbill* cover but could do nothing but ooze on and off stage slowly and pointlessly. One of the most amusing devices was the ferris wheel to which Moses heads were attached as his titles were announced and from which they were removed one by one as the Rockefellers established their control. The Albany hacks were initially amusing as comic caricature, but the limited animation which allowed them only a few movements made them as tiring as the giant come-on dolls outside funhouses. One could admire the skill of the men and women who manipulated the puppets, but the piece was finally disappointing. It was never as much fun nor as frightening as the works of some other practitioners of the art—Julie Taymor, for instance, or to take a more obvious political example, the Bread and Puppet Theater. Beyond that, *The Radiant City* was disconcerting about what it seemed to be saying. If this is an account of how Moses led us into the wilderness and left us there, does that mean we were better off in Egypt (Riis's tenements)?

Paul Zaloom's *My Civilization*, like *The Radiant City*, begins in the prehistorical past (the creation of the earth in Zaloom's case) and quickly jumps to the present. For Zaloom, it is a joke. Beginning his own autobiography with so august an event, he sets in comic perspective the ordinary business of being born, growing up, going to school, discovering sex, making one's way in the world—which, come to think of it, is rather extraordinary business after all.

Zaloom has been in Philadelphia recently, introducing the Movement Theatre International's new season, with a show that is essentially the one that I saw last year at the Pennsylvania Academy. There are some, if not enough, changes and additions—particularly in *Meanwhile...*, the section that deals with current events—but the material and the method are the ones that he has been polishing in and out of New York during the last year or so. The show consists of three parts. It opens with the autobiographical piece which depends for its comic effects on his range of voices and on the toys and cutouts and liquids that gain iconic stature—well, sort of—as he deploys them on the projector. In *Phood*, the best organized of the pieces, Zaloom plays a lecturer at a food purveyors' convention who enthusiastically recounts the latest inventions while projected texts from industry and government brochures emphasize the startling new artificial ingredients that await the unwary eater. *Meanwhile...*, the last and longest of the pieces, is more characteristic Zaloom, using found objects (some rather elaborate: electric mixers as nuclear power plants) to make satiric points. He moves back and forth among litter-covered card tables, using the titular connective as a bridge, as he intermeshes his accounts of nuclear hazards, art censorship, the S&L scandal, the collapsing real estate market. If the S&L and the National Endowment commentaries seem to have fallen behind the current headlines, they still refer to two of our perennial problems—greed and aggressive prudery. And Zaloom remains one of our sharpest and funniest performance artists.

GERALD WEALES

SCREEN

TWO TOO CUTE

'FISHER KING' & 'FRANKIE & JOHNNY'

When they weren't doing Shakespeare, great nineteenth-century actors like James Tyrone and Henry Irving performed such potboilers as *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Bells,* not only for profit but as easy outlets for their spellbinding talents. While a *Macbeth* and *Othello* might force these barnstorming geniuses to harness their powers to the freight of subtle characterization and difficult poetry, a crowd-pleasing melodrama or farce simply let them rip into bravura passages of pantomime and rant.

Discriminating moviegoers might have a good time at *The Fisher King* if they see that its director, Terry Gilliam, is functioning here visually in the same way that those old actors performed histrionically. Gilliam's previous films, *Time Bandits*, *Brazil*, and *Baron Munchausen*, were chaotic, but they were, from first shot to last, dreams of a unique, quirky imagination. But, with *The Fisher King*, Gilliam has gone mainstream in the worst way possible: He has taken a stale but potentially commercial script and lavished his visual gifts on it. His bravura keeps *The Fisher King* twitching, but it's the twitching of a galvanized corpse.

Some writers are fecund but *King*'s scriptwriter, Richard La Gravenese, is only busy, busy, busy. His plot has many layers and all of them are stale. The story's protagonist (Jeff Bridges) is the callous but hugely successful host of a radio phone-in show who accidentally taunts a demented caller into committing a mass murder. The celebrity's conscience plunges him to psychological and economic depths where he meets one of the victims of the slaughter (Robin Williams), a former medieval history professor whose wife's murder turned him into a hallucinating street person. Bridges commits himself to this unfortunate's recovery and thus redeems himself.

In Norman Mailer's play, *The Deer Park*, the hack producer Collie Munshin outlines a sure-fire scenario:

MUNSHIN

(The hero) goes into television, a bitter kid, he plays the angles. His career goes up like a skyrocket. Build him as a heel and then give the switch. He discovers humility. I don't know what we can find, but I wouldn't even worry

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about it....We can give Freddie a *wanderjahr*, stumbling around bums with tears in his eyes, lots of business where he loves everybody....

This speech was written more than twenty-five years ago and Mailer intended it to show how idiotic Hollywood could be. A quarter of a century later, *The Fisher King* is making a lot of money and being taken seriously by a lot of critics. Upward and onward with the arts.

But that's not all that's moldering in this script. Williams's madness conjures up visions of knights in Central Park and Holy Grails in town houses, and it's implied that Bridges can only truly redeem himself when he comes to share Williams's delusions. Thus, La Gravenese taps into that vein of American whimsy best exemplified by *Harvey*. Six-foot rabbits are real if you think they're real. Madness is cute. Madness is salvation.

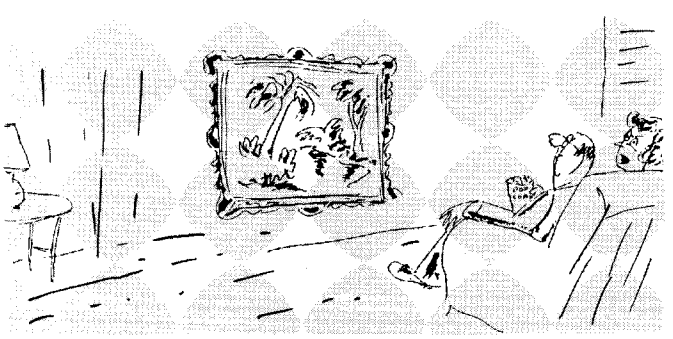
There is also a Pygmalion aspect to the story (Bridges helps Williams woo the girl of his dreams) and also one of those situations in which the hero learns to be sensitive enough to look his girlfriend in the eye and tell her that he loves her. So, if you find yourself in an audience watching this movie and don't like what you see, just wait a minute. It keeps turning into other movies, each more stale than the last.

Yet, because of Gilliam's direction, there is often something piquant to look at. Rendering fantasies of Williams and his more demented street cohorts, Gilliam shows us Grand Central turned into a ballroom, Central Park into a medieval forest, a publisher's office into a Broadway stage. Gilliam delights to work this sort of prestidigitation, and *The Fisher King* only lives when these flights of fancy take over the screen.

Robin Williams does not give one of his better performances. His madman is less a new creation than a tour of this talented comic's stand-up repertoire. Williams occasionally lets us see the history professor who once inhabited the vagrant's body, but what we mostly get is a whirligig of funny voices and funny faces that keeps us from seeing an individual we can care about. Furthermore, Williams works so hard to make his madman amusing and self-amusing that you begin to wonder why Bridges should dedicate himself to curing his friend. Thus, Williams's performance undercuts the central action of the movie.

But much of the acting is good. Mercedes Ruehl, as Bridges's lady, has a distinct triumph making the sort of woman who is usually called a good broad much too real to be called a good broad. Amanda Plummer, as Williams's sweetheart-to-be, accurately and poignantly depicts the sort of person who has become so used to pixilated solitude that she clings to it even in the face of love. And Jeff Bridges's work here shocked me into realizing what I should have known a long time ago: with Robert De Niro, he is one of the two best American film actors. It was Bridges's miserable acting instrument that deluded me: his face is blandly handsome, his voice unmemorable, his body that of your average ageing beach bum. But he is so accurate and generous in his conception of character, so deft and precise in his execution of details, and so empathetic with his fellow performers (he doesn't merely "share" a scene, he provides the kindling for his fellow actor's match) that he grounds everything he does in reality. Like Oscar Wilde, Bridges has nothing to declare but his genius.

Terry Gilliam has a lot more to declare than he shows here. He needs a script that will bring his gift for subverting and illuminating reality to fruition.



"But, dear, we already saw this picture."

Terence McNally has adapted his two-character play, *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, to the screen. In doing so, he has added, by my precise count, nine hundred and forty-seven characters to interact with the title roles, and three thousand, five hundred and sixty-one episodes to give the one set play a more...uh, shall we say...*expansive* quality. Actually, my count can't be all that precise because, dismayed by the obtuseness of the writing (McNally is fatally torn between his desire to write the kind of bohemian smartass talk he's good at and his self-imposed obligation to write the salt-of-the-working-class dialogue for which he has absolutely no talent whatsoever), the underwater lethargy of Gary Marshall's direction, the sitcom glibness of the acting (exception: the great Kate Nelligan as a brassy waitress), and the insulting ugliness of the photography, I fled the theater about two-thirds of the way through the movie. But, from what I did see, I took note of the following:

Johnny, an ex-con short-order cook, makes his first romantic approach to the waitress, Frankie, over the body of an epileptic who is having a fit on their restaurant's floor. This scene is meant to be cute.

Nathan Lane plays Michelle Pfeiffer's gay neighbor. Lane and McNally conspire to give us a Nice Homosexual that is the equivalent of all those Nice Negroes of the films of the fifties and early sixties. In other words, his function is to stand on the dramatic sidelines, smile wisely and tolerantly at the hilarious doings of his daffy heterosexual friends, and always give good advice.

There are numerous shots of New York street life with voice-over dialogue as Johnny courts Frankie on the way home from work. Otherwise, all the many conversations in this movie are rendered in the usual shot-reverse shot talking heads format, with the camera, like a good little dog, staring at whoever is talking. This is Gary Marshall's idea of the resources of cinema.

The very best and brightest of the New York critics—Terence Rafferty and David Denby among others—are praising this film for its sweetness, superlative acting, justness of observation, and glorious romantic comedy. I think I'll retire to Bedlam.

RICHARD ALLEVA

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ART

TRANSCENDENTAL LONGINGS

THE WHITNEY'S TWENTIETH CENTURY

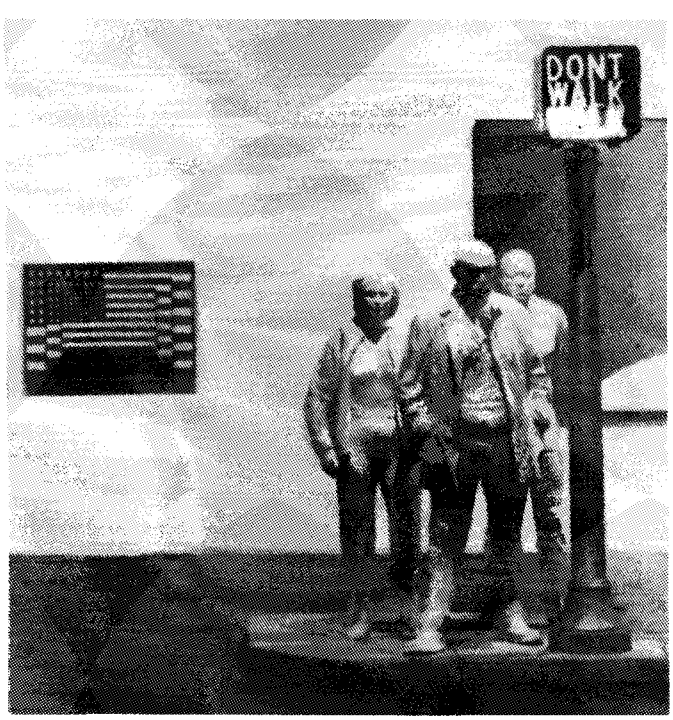
Every other spring New York City's Whitney Museum of American Art puts on its biennial, an exhibition meant to give the public a panoramic glimpse of the art scene's cutting edge. "American Life in American Art, 1900-1990," a theme-oriented show drawn from the permanent collection, celebrates the riches of the Whitney collection while seeming to make a case for the latest biennial's main emphasis.

The work on display, according to the curators, was selected to "explore the ways American artists documented and interpreted the political, social, and economic concerns of our century." Last spring's biennial was sharply criticized for a bias in favor of topical art that rawly addressed the most urgent public issues of the day, AIDS in particular. The current exhibition wants to respond that American art's central role has always been to speak to, and in some way help to resolve through clarification, hard public problems. It even seems to imply that certain of those problems should have had the same relevance in the past as they have today. Early on, the show's running commentary excuses the quietly shimmering classicism of works like Charles Sheeler's industrial landscape of 1932 by explaining that Sheeler, and artists like him, didn't know about the damage industry would eventually do to the environment. Well, Velázquez didn't know that eventually a pluralist political system would be considered a more humane idea than an absolutist one—should Spain's minister of culture go on television and apologize for all those portraits of Philip II?

Throughout the show, one senses the struggle between the art and the rising din of historical narcissism. But the Whitney's collection and the curators' instincts carry the day and result in some inspired groupings of painting and sculpture.

Divided into six galleries, the show's first half, 1900-1950, arranges work according to the themes of upper-class life, daily life and entertainments, urban landscape, rural landscape, art in the Great Depression, and art after World War II. A visitor should take the categories lightly, follow Baudelaire's recommendation to modern painters to play the *flâneur*, and wander randomly. Loose similarities yield clear contrasts, such as the one between Reginald Marsh, an American Scene painter active in the Depression, and George Bellows, a member of an earlier coterie of artists know as the Eight. Led by Robert Henri, the Eight were also dubbed the "ashcan" school by some critics on account of their fascination with the less genteel aspects of city life. Today we might call their style "povertiresque," Melville's mocking description of a picturesque ideal some novelists had of the poor and their diversions. But a genre boxing painting like George Bellows's well-known *Dempsey and Firpo* (1924) contains provocative elements. Behind the figure of Jack Dempsey plunging backward out of the ring (he landed in the lap of the artist, who urged him to continue fighting), a murky brown haze envelops a mass of people uniformly alike. Dempsey's hurtling form seems to have sprung from the audience's unconscious self, as if each person there had the identical dream of liberation from an anonymous crowd. By contrast to Bellows's unexpected (probably to him, too) astuteness, a surprising cynicism lurks under the surface of Reginald Marsh's *Why Not Use the L*? (1930). The pathos and weariness of the picture's black subway riders are undercut by the headline on a stray newspaper page that has fallen to the floor: "Does the Sex Urge Explain Judge Carter's Strange Disappearance?" With comic intent, the Paris-born, Yale-educated Marsh associates the physical and spiritual fatigue of his disenfranchised figures with sexual famishment—a piquantly intellectual version of "povertiresque." Artistic temperament in both works goes far deeper than subject, social moment, or style.

While Henri's realists and the early American abstractionists around Alfred Stieglitz exhibited side by side for a time, in Europe wave after wave of abstraction drowned out realism entirely. The stylistic pendulum rapidly swings back and forth in American art, both trends always, if unevenly, present at any given time. Indeed, the artistic desire to convey useful verities in a society lacking tradition or a homogeneous culture has generally made twentieth-century American realism and abstraction less realistic and less abstract than their European counterparts had been. Joseph Stella's thoroughly abstract *Brooklyn Bridge* (1939), with its soaring arc of echoing lights that seem to catch reflections from an unseen future, attains a stronger truthfulness to the hopeful energy of a definite time and place than could a work done along realistic lines. On the other hand, in Edward Hopper's realistic *Early Sunday Morning*, the endless row of darkened storefronts and apartment windows becomes a barrier of desolate form eclips-



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ing the actual building it represents. The weak incongruous light that fills the canvas provides the most articulate abstract touch: you feel that in 1930, the year the painting was made, the American Dream had gotten diffused into empty space. In adapting European styles to the American experience, American artists, even the most modernist, paid the greatest deference to experience.

That experience could sometimes coalesce into colorful art movements like regionalism, whose adherents harbored a keen dislike of European influences and Eastern cities. Older influences from across the ocean, however, they warmly assimilated. In Grant Wood's triptych, *Study for Breaking the Prairie* (1935-39), a Renaissance perfection frames the regionalist nostalgia for traditional rural values and a lost Edenic innocence. The most gifted regionalist, Thomas Hart Benton, adopted the lively decadence of a mannerist line to evoke forgotten ideals; interestingly, if you stand back a little from his canvases, you can begin to make out the explosive arabesques of Benton's most famous student, the abstract expressionist painter, Jackson Pollock.

If the regionalists distrusted city folk, urban social realists like Ben Shawn and Raphael Soyer had no sympathy for what they saw as the regionalists' escapist idylls, though both groups shared a hostility to industrial capitalism. Throughout this period, though, and beyond, "originals" hard to define continued to work. Some, like Georgia O'Keefe, with her archly macabre skulls and Orphic flowers, or her New Mexico mountains transformed into softly glowing human contours, are as widely appreciated as any European modern. Others have remained underservedly obscure to the general public. The eerie animism of Charles Burchfield, an American van Gogh; the work of Louis Guglielmi, a surrealist with a social passion; George Tooker's friezes of urban anomie; Paul Cadmus's comic nightmares of libidos on the loose—all these figures are examples of how steadfastly American artists cultivated their idiosyncracies the faster they absorbed European styles.

By the fifties, however, American painters and sculptors could stop looking to Europe for signs of future times. It's ironic that abstraction, having been developed almost to the limit by European artists, should have reached its consummation in America after World War II. The second half of the Whitney's show, 1950-1990, begins with abstract expressionism, the homegrown American artistic style that whisked away the mantle of the avant-garde from European shoulders.

David Smith's wonderful sculpture *Hudson River Landscape* (1951) appropriately stands at the entrance to the first gallery, which also contains work by Willem de Kooning and Lee Krasner. The title is rich with associations. The Hudson River School landscape painters, at work in the midnineteenth century, excoriated the country's expanding urban commercialism and depicted sublimely shining hills without a city. Like the Puritans, they were reacting against the radical individualism that threatened their hopes, yet they too found themselves borrowing from its energies to fight its effects.

That quintessentially American conflict between self and the larger life took center stage in the work of the abstract expressionists. Brightly or darkly shining wills without city or hill, these artists *literalized* abstract forms by striving to connect them to universal emotions or states of mind. Their often tragic lives arouse a response in Lee Krasner's *The Seasons* (1957), where gently rounded shapes of green, pink, and egg-shell white fill a giant canvas with images of bounty and sustenance amidst change. Painted one year after Jackson Pollock, Krasner's husband, drunkenly slammed his car into a tree, the picture perhaps shows Krasner's quiet gratitude for surviving the violence of Pollock's life and his death.

After abstract expressionism a playfully direct engagement with the culture animates American art. The German sociologist Werner Sombart once wrote that in America, socialism would break up on the reef of apple pie. In the sixties American pop artists hurled custard pies at Apple Pie. There was an increasing concern with recovering objects from the sea of their mass-produced look-alikes, as if the key to salvation in America lay in contemplating a thing down to its origins instead of consuming it down to the last drop or kilowatt. Artists like Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine tried to reclaim the "sacred aura"—to quote an overquoted phrase—of things, not art.

Since the sixties, American artists have lowered their expectations, yet they've become more exuberant about expressing their disillusionment; they've grown more confident in their cynicism, and more energetic in their weary self-disclosures. Given space enough and time, much could be said about the stunning mélange of styles and personalities that make up the rest of the show: from Andy Warhol to Mike Kelly. One development worth noting is that for all the freedom and inventiveness of the last thirty years the dominant artistic style is a kind of tongue-in-cheek naturalism. "American Art in American Life, 1900-1990" cheerfully ends with Kiki Smith's sculptures of a naked man and woman hanging on metal stands like bloody slabs of meat. A show that began with the intention of demonstrating how preoccupied American art has been with social and political realities ends in a lurid puff of concrete form and abstract emotion. Yet for all its shallowness, Smith's piece isn't wholly inadequate as a concluding note. It's a good indicator of the times. Postmodernist artists perceive everything to be political except politics; they see power everywhere except where it does the most harm. In representing an atrocious consequence without its cause, Smith takes for granted a set of generic assumptions on the part of her audience. Here are two figures, battered, desiccated, dead—you know why. It's like publishing the last chapter of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* without the rest of the story. But as American artists continue to pass back and forth between abstraction and realism, between transcendental longings and sardonic replies, American society will continue to demand new forms of engagement or escape, and the current artistic attitude of knowing bemusement might just become less of a pose, and start to yield real meaning out of a more genuine confusion.

LEE SIEGEL

Lee Siegel, a frequent Commonweal *contributor, is a freelance writer living in New York City.*

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Harshness to poetry, poetry to revelation

BROKEN VESSELS
Andre Dubus
David R. Godine, $19.95, 195 pp.

David Toolan

Writers have their own set of moral commandments to add to the classic ten. "I can't write about any place I haven't smelled," admits Andre Dubus. On the night of July 23, 1986, that imperative had drawn him from his home in Haverhill, Massachusetts, near the New Hampshire border, to a seedy section of Boston to do research for a story he was writing about a prostitute. On his way home late that night, on a four-lane segment of I-93 North, Dubus stopped to assist Luz Santiago and her brother Luis, whose car had collided with a motorcycle abandoned in the third lane. (The cyclist, drunk, had fallen off his bike, and fearing arrest, had wandered off.) Moments later, an oncoming car struck the three, killing the twenty-three-year-old Luis, slightly injuring Luz, and leaving Dubus's life hanging by a thread. Twelve operations followed, including the amputation of his left leg; in January 1987 his sixth child, Madeleine, was born, and in November of that year, his third marriage (to the writer Peggy Rambach) broke apart and the police arrived at his door to take Madeleine and her older sister, Cadence, to their mother. By June of 1988, Dubus confesses in this stunning collection of essays, "I wanted to die."

What happened to Dubus in an instant, at the very moment of reaching out to help strangers who scarcely spoke English, would be hard enough to bear for any man. What gives the event a special edge in this case has to do with the boisterous physicality of this man: ex-Marine captain, hunter, weight-lifter, runner, boozer, riotous Red Sox fan, hilarious storyteller, and sensual lover of women—someone made in the image of Hemingway. All gone? Literally not a leg to stand on? In front of all the attendants at the Hale Hospital physical therapy clinic, Dubus tells us in the title essay, he broke down and wept uncontrollably, blurting out, "I'm not a man among men anymore and I'm not a man among women either." "Mrs. T," his principal therapist, says nothing for a while, proceeds to massage the foot, ankle, and calf of what he now calls his "good leg," and then looks straight at him and says: "It's in Jeremiah.... The potter is making a pot and it cracks. So he makes a new vessel. You can't make a new vessel out of a broken one. It's time to find the real you."

Broken Vessels collects twenty essays, written between 1977 and 1990, that display not only the "real" Dubus risen from the wish to die, but also his serviceable old vessel—the one that can so masterfully track the pain, complications, and precarious choices of his character. ("How rare it is," John Updike has written of Dubus's work, "to encounter characters with wills, with a sense of choice.") In these tales from his life, we move with the author from his Catholic boyhood in Cajun-Creole Louisiana up through the joys and responsibilities of fatherhood and into the tangled business of making a living as a writer who refuses to produce the big novel publishers want. Along the way, we get an elegiac train trip across the country ("Railroad Sketches"), a bitterly funny encounter with anything but "sweet and lovable sheep" ("Out like a Lamb"), an account of visits by two ghosts Dubus was "unable to help" ("Two Ghosts"), and the careful dissection of the author's youthful habit of idealizing females, a tendency that slowly yields to an effort "to see women as they are...creatures like me, who...do not need me to keep them from being splashed by cars, from falling down the stairs" ("Of Robin Hood and Womanhood"). "On Charon's Warf" Dubus reflects on how the mystery of the Eucharist—"without touch, God is a monologue...he must touch and be touched"—connects with marriage, which often suffocates under words, and which perishes if it is not nourished by silent rituals of affection (such as scrambling eggs for your beloved). "Under the Lights" is pure lyricism, a tribute to Class C baseball and Billy Joe Barrett's amazing home run—that sends "a bright and vanishing sphere of human possibility soaring into the darkness beyond our vision."

By the time you have moved through these story-fragments of a writer's life, you

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will understand why Tobias Wolff, in his introduction, claims that for Dubus "the quotidian and the spiritual don't exist on different planes, but infuse each other." You will also know, freshly, the gift of the storyteller. "Shortstory writers," insists Dubus, "simply do what human beings have always done." Like "good counselors who won't let you get by with the lack of honesty and commitment we bring to abstractions...short story writers simply do what human beings have always done. They write stories because they have to; because they cannot rest...because they are human, and all of us need to speak into the silence of mortality, to interrupt and ever so briefly stop the quiet flow, and with stories try to understand at least some of it."

Finally, as you will have come to see in "The Judge and Other Snakes," a story of a young girl rescued from a beating by a town bully, it will be no surprise that Dubus stopped for those strangers on the highway. It is his habit, the habit of one perhaps more inclined to brawl than the next fellow, but one who learned from an unlikely quarter to turn his strength to other purposes. Pacifists might well meditate the paradox, as Dubus puts it, that "the Marine Corps develops in a recruit at boot camp, an officer candidate at Quantico, the instinct to surrender oneself for another; expands that instinct beyond families or mates or other beloveds to include all Marines...which means, sadly, that the Marine Corps, in a way limited to military action, has in general instilled more love in its members than Christian churches have in theirs."

Without self-pity, with unflinching honesty, we come in the last third of this wondrous book to the accident—and to what it's like to be a paraplegic. Everything takes "three times as long." You cannot move quickly enough, for instance, to prevent your infant daughter from slicing off her index finger in the sprocket of an exercise bicycle.

The writer's challenge, as Goethe once put it, is to turn the harsh truth of one's life into poetry. In a deeper sense, which Andre Dubus demonstrates, there is a further task, to turn poetry into revelation.

CITIZENSHIP: THE ORIGINAL VERSION

PERICLES OF ATHENS AND THE BIRTH OF DEMOCRACY
Donald Kagan
Free Press, $22.50, 287 pp.

Francis Flaherty

Citizens are chatting and laughing in the Agora, the marketplace of ancient Athens. Soon, they slowly begin to walk over to the Pnyx, a nearby hill, for a meeting of the city assembly. Of course, as in any crowd, there are some laggards. But they soon quicken their pace: For city officials are carrying the rope soaked in red dye forward toward the meeting place, and any tardy citizens with the telltale stain on their clothing will be fined.

That's a vivid and revealing glimpse of life in the Athens of Pericles, fifth century B.C. In a scene, the reader learns that common folks participated in the legislature and that their participation was required. One gets a feel, too, for the simplicity and small scale of Athenian democracy, so unlike our vast, modern, multilayered version.

Through such vignettes, Yale classicist Donald Kagan brings to life the world's first democracy. His touchstone is Pericles, Athenian aristocrat, builder of the Parthenon, and visionary of democracy whose political genius brought us such tools of statecraft as the economic embargo and treaty arbitration clauses.

Why a biography of Pericles? To capitalize on the upsurge in democratic interest since Communist Eastern Europe began to crumble in 1989, Kagan says. A modern

The College Chaplain

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College of the Holy Cross

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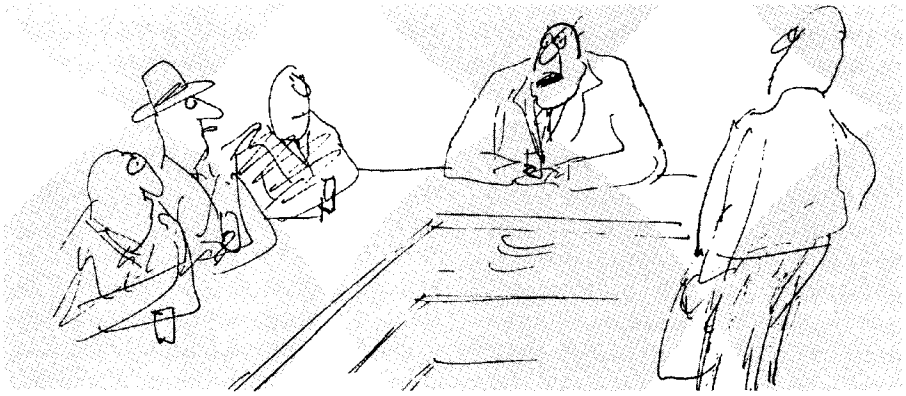
book about democracy's first and maybe foremost statesman can help Eastern Europeans and others seize the unprecedented opportunity this geopolitical shift represents, he believes. And seized it should be. For despite all the lip service, democracy is "one of the rarest, most delicate and fragile flowers in the jungle of human experience," Kagan cautions. In two-and-a-half millennia, he says, "only in Athens and in the United States...has democracy lasted for as much as 200 years."

On this basis, Kagan gives us an insightful, admiring but objective, portrayal of a rare man and the city he led for nearly three decades. Certainly, the book provokes fruitful if unflattering comparisons between our democracy and the original one.

With respect to the red-dyed rope, for example, the modern reader can only be abashed at the Athenians' broad political participation. Besides the assembly, called the *ekklesia*, which met a minimum of forty times a year, Athens chose the bulk of its public officials by lot among the citzenry. The admirable presumption was that all citizens should be able to perform most public duties, and that they have an obligation to do so. And then there was the *graphe paranomon*, which taxed Athenians with knowledge of all their laws. Under the doctrine, if a citizen made a proposal inconsistent with any other statute, he would be fined. Three fines would cost him his citizenship. Through such recitations, Kagan makes us rethink the meaning of "civic duty."

Pericles himself is rendered with equal vividness. While not technically the founder of democracy—his grandfather, Cleisthenes, was—Pericles broadened its practice dramatically. The poor, for instance, could hardly serve for free in the military, on juries, or in other public activities. Pericles made payment for such service routine, thus opening democracy to



"I mistrust politicians more than any guy in this bar."

all classes (though the door stayed shut to women, slaves, and foreigners). Too, Pericles promoted and presided over a rare flowering of intellectual and artistic achievement. He crowned all Greece with temples and statues and he counted among his friends Sophocles; Phidias the sculptor; Herodotus, the father of history; and Hippodamus of Miletus, the first city planner. And, of course, he gave the world a grand new political vision in which common folk, through free and open reasoning and debate, controlled their own destiny.

Pericles made no less a mark in foreign affairs. Relations among Athens and its empire; Sparta and its Peloponnesian allies; and Persia were suffused with continual wariness, episodic war, and shifting alliances and perceptions. In this arena, as complex as any modern cold war, Pericles and others first hatched such notions as defensive alliances and limited deterrence. It is no wonder that the Peloponnesian War and other events of that time are staples of study today at the Naval War College and Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

For all his admiration for his subject, though, Kagan is generally objective, shining his light on such darker parts of the Periclean vision as the question of empire.

The Athenian Empire began as the Delian League, a voluntary association of Greek cities formed to counter the perennial Persian threat. But the cessation of that threat made it clear that Pericles—statesman, democrat, peacemaker—was also a purposeful imperialist. As Kagan puts it, "[I]n spite of the [Persian] peace," Pericles "had no thoughts of abandoning the league that had become an empire. Nor did he wish to sacrifice the glory, the political and military power, and the money that went with it. Athens needed the empire to protect its own security and to support the creation and maintenance of the great democratic society Pericles had in mind."

There were, then, moral tradeoffs Pericles made for his democratic experiment. Understanding those tradeoffs, and the man's other failings, is as vital as understanding the greatness of his vision.

Pericles's is a great tale, and Kagan tells it well. No small thing, the book is an entertaining read too, full of fun facts. The reader learns that Pericles had an elongated head that was fodder for many Athenian gibes; that the high-living, eponymous Sybarites barred roosters from their town of Sybaris so they could sleep late; and that a main job of the Athenian city commissioners was to make sure the dung collectors didn't deposit their materials within ten stadia of the municipal walls.

On the other hand, Kagan does deliver a little more of the military blow-by-blow than this reader wanted. More important, the author—who has taken conservative positions on such hot campus issues as the multicultural-curriculum movement and the wave of criticism of the "politically correct"—makes similarly conservative noises in the last chapter here. For example: "The evidence is strong that democracy and economic freedom are more likely to bring prosperity than any other system," Kagan writes.

Problem is, such conclusions are so broad and out-of-step with the rest of the volume that one is tempted to think there was a printing foul-up and these last pages of *Pericles* are actually the first pages of some other text. My advice: Read the book—but stop at page 270.

REVIEWERS

DAVID TOOLAN, S.J., *is associate editor of* America *magazine and director of the Catholic Book Club.*

FRANCIS FLAHERTY *is a New York-based writer specializing in legal issues.*

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Leaders & liberation

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Davis's well-written and comprehensive history of black Catholics is a work that I found hard to finish because I kept lending it to my black students to encourage them to find research topics on their own heritage for term papers in one of my courses. This is a gold mine of information on the African-American presence in the American Catholic church. I knew much, for example, about St. Augustine, Florida's great pride in having the oldest parish in the continental United States but I did not know how substantial the black presence was in that city in the prerevolutionary period just as I did not know that the majority of the founding families of Los Angeles were persons of color. Father Davis not only recovers those facts but he traces, in embarrassing detail, the relationship of the church to the blacks both of the pre-Civil War and Reconstruction periods.

The History of Black Catholics in the United States, *by Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., Crossroad, $24.95, 347 pp.*

The story that Davis tells is also one of heroics; that of Augustus Tolton who labored as the first black priest in the U.S. in the last century and layman Daniel Rudd who not only was a distinguished apologist for the faith but edited a national Catholic newspaper and Mary Elizabeth Lange, a Cuban-born Haitian, who founded the first successful religious community of black women in the early nineteenth century. Most of these figures, and their twentieth-century counterparts, made their mark on the life of the church despite racial prejudice and overt hostility from within that church. The few white figures who saw the racism of the American church and spoke against it get their moment in this story but, ironically enough, it is the Vatican which chided, admonished, and encouraged the American hierarchy to abandon its defense of slavery before the Civil War and, afterwards, to take a serious interest in the evangelization of the black community. Anyone who thinks that the American hierarchy is a compliant instrument in the hands of Rome will soon be disabused of that notion when they read Davis's account of their genteel neglect and persistent temporizing in the face of Roman demands.

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *is chair of the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

I cannot recommend this book too highly. It is a major contribution to American church history; a prophetic judgment on the church in this country; and a resource for the recuperation of a neglected part of our common story. Along the way, Davis points to areas where research is yet to be done so his book has the added value of being a spur to further work in this area.

One final thought occurs: The book begins with a fine chapter on the historical role of blacks in the early history of the church. Someone (Davis himself?) would do the church a great service by doing a book-length study of that topic following it down into modern times. It is a sorely needed work and would find, I am convinced, an appreciative audience.

Lincoln and Mamiya make only glancing references to Roman Catholicism in their study of the black church in America. What they have done is to focus on seven of the largest black Protestant denominations in this country to do an exhaustive inventory of the state of the black church. Aided by grants from both the Lilly and Ford Foundations, they have been able to do sociological soundings and data gathering to assess everything from the educational status of pastors and the role of women in the church to the state of church architecture and the bifurcation of the black church experience as a chasm widens between the middle-class and the inner-city experience as well as the tensions inherent in a once rural style of ecclesiology giving way to an increasingly secularized urbanization.

Lincoln/Mamiya move forward and backward (from history to actual praxis) as they tell their story (there is a readable narrative here) while detailing the enormous amount of data they have uncovered free from the jargon which tends to afflict such works. Furthermore, they do not hesitate to look forward to describe, both problems (e.g., a need for a clergy that is more professionalized) and challenges (Islam as an alternative belief system that is especially attractive to males; the problems of family life).

The Black Church in the African-American Experience can be read with profit as a straightforward report of the African-American Protestant experience but its more permanent value will be as a jumping off place for further studies and as a very fine reference tool since the authors have been generous enough to provide us with over fifty pages of notes to the text and a very useful bibliography of studies.

The Black Church in the African-American Experience, *by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, Duke University Press, $47.50, 519 pp.*

The second volume (the first appeared in English in 1985) of Martin Brecht's massive biography of Martin Luther follows the reformer's life from the period immediately after his break from Rome down to the complex events which led to the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and its reshaping in 1531 after the criticisms of the Catholic parties involved. It was a period of intense activity in Luther's life: he worked on his translation of the Bible; he entered into energetic polemics with the reformers to his left and the Catholic critics

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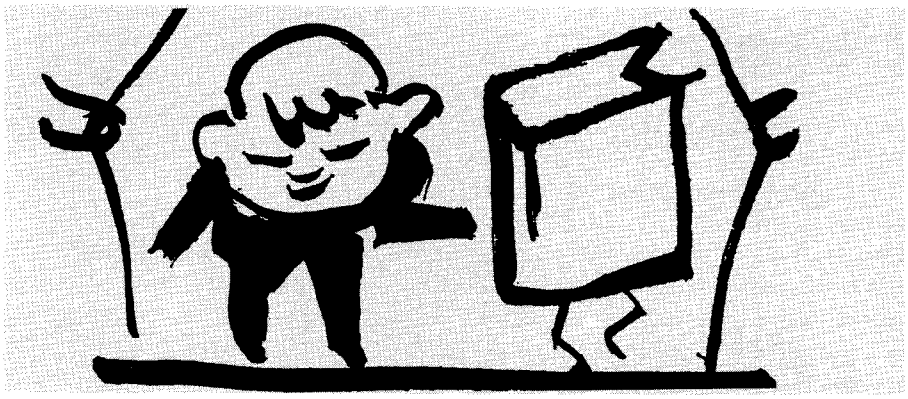

on his right; he was involved in the Peasant's Revolt; he married and began his family; and, in the midst of all of this, there were the unremitting labors of reshaping a vision of the church and its polity as he attempted to create an evangelical community which, despite his own best efforts, was increasingly being called "Lutheran."

Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532, *by Martin Brecht, Fortress, $47.95, 543 pp.*

Brecht follows this frenetic period with tenacity and almost numbing detail. His biographical eye, understandably enough, is always on Luther but that unremitting gaze makes the other players in the decade recede into stage props against which the reformer operates. I very much admire the detail in this book as Brecht moves from Luther's familial intimacy to the large socio-political events of the time, and his obvious sympathy for his subject moves me to want to read more.

There is much to learn from Brecht's mastery of the sources and his earnest handling of them, but I still must confess that were I to recommend one book that most captures the vigor and panache of Luther it would have to be Heiko Oberman's *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (Yale, 1989; see my remarks in this column, 3/9/90). That recommendation notwithstanding, this is a major contribution to Luther biography with the third volume eagerly awaited.

The books noted above are, in the words of one of Walker Percy's fictional characters, "big books on big topics." Monsignor Shannon's most recent book is a little book on the biggest topic of all: the relationship of the human to God. Monsignor Shannon is an acknowledged spiritual director, retreat master, and scholar. This current book returns to one of his central concerns: how a person becomes aware of God in ordinary life without bifurcating one's existence into the "spiritual" and "secular" realm.

A number of things allow me to recommend this book to the widest possible audience. First, Shannon wants to communicate with people. He writes at a profound level but there is none of that treacly language that clots so much prose in this area. Next, he writes, not for the cloistered few, but for those who would really like to get a perspective on prayer which shapes and energizes a person's life. Drawing primarily from the writings of Thomas Merton (on which he is an acknowledged authority), he proposes, correctly, it seems to me, that prayer is *being* and *listening* long before it is saying and acting even though it is also *acting* as Shannon's linkage of prayer with a Christian witness in the world shows.

Silence on Fire: The Prayer of Awareness, *by William H. Shannon, Crossroad, $13.95, 168 pp.*

There is so much common sense in what he has to say and so little that smacks of churchiness, that one detects the ring of authentic experience in his invitation to a deep life of prayer. I very much liked Shannon's earlier *Seeking the Face of God (1988)* but I like this book, which is more accessible to the ordinary reader, even more.

Witherington's book is not for the biblical beginner. It is a rather technical study that attempts to get to the self-consciousness of Jesus through an examination of the earliest strata of New Testament texts, especially the Synoptics and the shadowy source known as "Q." It assumes both an acquaintance with the contemporary debates in New Testament scholarship and presupposes a thorough knowledge of the text (I had to read this book with a Bible open on my desk). If one were to encapsulate the author's thesis it would be his strong conviction, *pace* the more radical wing of New Testament criticism, that one can reconstruct a good deal of what Jesus thought about himself and, further, in that reconstruction one can critique the more extreme forms of the hermeneutics of suspicion that are so regnant in contemporary criticism. His book, then, is valuable for the world of biblical criticism but is equally important for the systematic theologian.

The Christology of Jesus, *by Ben Witherington III, Fortress, $24.95, 310 pp.*

Professional exegetes will have to judge the reliability of Witherington's results but for this reader, at least, it was a breath of fresh air to see some of the more reductive conclusions of biblical criticism given a stringent appraisal. Jesus cannot be pigeonholed as a Hellenistic magician or a wandering cynic philosopher or a pious itinerant *hasid* or any of the other several rubrics under which he has been categorized. Witherington is too sophisticated to think that one can read back into the New Testament Christologies which derive from the process of doctrinal development (e.g., that he saw himself as the second person of the Trinity) but he is very much convinced that Jesus did see himself in messianic terms; that he did consciously see himself as linked to God in an intimate manner; that he did make claims that went beyond the standard claims of the prophet; that he *may* have seen himself as the incarnation of the Wisdom of God.

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Implicit in Witherington's analysis is a whole catena of questions that require (and, de facto, are receiving) a vigorous critical debate: Has the distinction between the self-consciousness of Christ and the later christological faith of the early church been overblown? Have the criteria for the authenticity of the sayings and deeds of Jesus a solid philosophical undergirding or do they mask an often inarticulated ideology? Is the time ripe for a sea change in biblical criticism from a hermeneutics of suspicion to a hermeneutics of trust? This book does not address those questions *ex professo* but they are made urgent by the kind of conclusions Witherington arrives at. If Witherington's book urges more reflection on those issues that would be an added contribution to the one he has already made in this valuable addition to the literature on the one whom, in the words of the late Albert Schweitzer, each age creates in its own image and likeness.

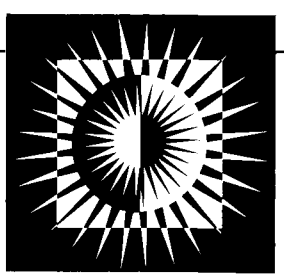
Pace the observation of Robert McAfee Brown in his preface to Batstone's book, a good deal of liberation theology is not written from below; it is the product of theologians who have drunk deeply of European (read: German) academic theology. The best known of these theologians (Gutierrez, Sobrino, Boff, Croatto, etc.) all share this in common: they accept contemporary biblical scholarship; they utilize hermeneutical strategies derived from post-Enlightenment philosophy; they work in an ecumenical theological context. What is new about their theology, as Batstone makes clear in this well-written survey of Christology, is that they wrestle mightily with the issue of how to combine critical theological reflection with the actual situation in which they find themselves. They do this by advancing a critique of the ideology embedded in the theology they utilize from across the ocean and in their attempt to reshape that theology so as to speak directly to their lives and their common culture. Hence the question: Who is Jesus Christ for Latin America today?

The most helpful sections of Batstone's book are to be found in his fair-minded analyses of the various Christologies from these theologians; analyses which are sympathetic but critical. The most intriguing part of the book (but, alas, the shortest) surveys some Christological formulations which, indeed, do come "from below." By rereading traditional popular formulations about Jesus some of these theologians are gaining new insights into the inexhaustible mysteries of Christ. Thus, for one striking example, a Maryknoll missionary has discovered that Indians of the *Altoplano* make no sense at all of the notion of Jesus as *liberator*; they see him as *humilde* not in a Uriah Heepish way of humble but as a signal virtue of the strongest of their people: sure of himself and, covertly, unmovably resistant towards the injustice of others; in other words, a *justo juez*—the just judge who demands dignity for self and for others.

From Conquest to Struggle: Jesus of Nazareth in Latin America, *by David Batstone, SUNY, $14.95, 224 pp.*

Liberation theology in general, and its Christology and ecclesiology in particular, is much critiqued today but its enduring value for the world theological community is that it has made all of us aware of ideological traces in our thinking and, more importantly, has taught us how different our faith-reflection is depending on where we reflect and how full our stomachs are. Batstone (an Evangelical Protestant with wide experience in the Americas) has rendered us all a service with this book enhanced, as it is, with full notes, a long bibliography, and a very full index. It makes a nice supplement to Arthur McGovern's *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* (1989) which is still the most panoramic view of Latin American liberation theology but sparing in its Christological reflections.

James Fowler has done interesting research over the past two decades on analyzing the stages of the life of faith from the perspective of developmental psychology. In that enterprise he has added, among



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other things, to how we think about the relationship of narrative and belief. His latest book concerns itself with these "stages of faith" (Fowler's paradigm sees seven of them) in terms of the church. He believes that we are on the cusp of a paradigm shift in ecclesiology and he intends to anticipate that shift by imagining new ways of conceiving the Christian community.

While Fowler would not deny that older forms of church will persist, he makes a plea for a more "public church" (the term is from Martin Marty) which will engage the community in terms of the exigent realities of this world. Fowler does not wish to turn the church into a pious social service agency (proclamation, worship, education, etc., are very much a part of his thinking), but he very much wants the church to connect itself to the world and its needs. Among those needs is the generation of theological metaphors which make God a vibrant reality for contemporary discourse. He likes the metaphorical theology of Sally McFague and offers some trenchant remarks about both its promise and shortcomings. He also hopes for an ecclesial theology which would be holistic enough to confront the broad challenges of ecology but, alas, is a bit too smitten by the rococo effusions of Matthew Fox.

Weaving the New Creation: Stages of Faith and the Public Church, *by James W. Fowler, HarperCollins, $17.95, 208 pp.*

I have mixed feelings about Fowler's book. Scattered throughout its pages are some very sensible reflections on the needs of the church but the work, as a whole, does not seem very coherently sustained (it was stitched together from disparate lectures, course offerings, etc.) as an argument. The tonal register elides from theological analysis to biographical narratives to platform exhortation until we get to the final two chapters of the book on the public church which is at the heart of his argument. Those final chapters, it seems to me, provide, in outline, a book that Fowler should write; the present work strikes me as a prolegomenon to such a systematic study.

Empowerment is one of those post-Vatican II theological buzzwords which could use a rest even though the concept itself carries with it many neuralgic problems for the church: the problem of the "clericalization" of lay ministries; the manner of decision making in the church; the relationship of charism to community; and so on. Michael Downey has assembled a broad range of essayists to consider those problems both historically and existentially. David N. Power's historical analysis of the rise of episcopal authority in the early church at the expense of charismatic authority (e.g., of the martyrs and confessors) sets out the tension that circles around the issue of power to this day: how to provide a centering authority for the coherence

That They Might Live: Power, Empowerment, and Leadership in the Church, *edited by Michael Downey, Crossroad, $19.95, 222 pp.*

of a tradition without caving into the tendency to accumulate power for the pleasure of its exercise. The other contributors, in one fashion or another, circle back to that issue albeit in different modes.

Space forbids even a gloss of the many areas touched on in this book (there are thirteen essays) but I would single out Bishop Robert Morneau's ten theses as worthy of extended discussion. One of those theses lists, but does not discuss at length, a catena of other terms in contemporary ecclesiological discourse which need to be correctly understood if "empowerment" is to have coherent meaning; words like subsidiarity, delegation, co-responsibility, consultation, and collegiality. Those terms are used a great deal by those who try to sort out the relationship between Rome and the local episcopate, just as they are used to discuss the local parish and its relationship to the ordinary. That these relationships are not always harmonious simply underscores how much distance there is between theological assertion (empowerment deriving from baptismal dignity) and the regnant realities of church life. It makes books like this both timely and needed.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 674)

since titles must conform to our typographic style, the space available, and our (fallible) judgment of readers' interests and writers' intentions.

O'Malley on abortion

Portland, Maine

To the Editors: At the recent "Tribute to Frank O'Malley" at Notre Dame, I was pointedly reminded that in 1950 O'Malley had warned, in an uncharacteristic Wranglers banquet address (his context was usually literary) of coming challenges to the dignity of man—abortion, euthanasia, etc. His Christian humanism rested upon that dignity, so one could not fairly conclude, as Frank McConnell suggests in his September 27 article, that O'Malley would be uncertain about the unborn or neutral about abortion. He stated otherwise, explicitly. He *would* recognize the redemptive power of suffering—in bearing the burdensome child or, for the sinner, in bearing the burden of an abortion.

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Fellowship Opportunities

The Association for Religion and Intellectual Life invites applications for followships to work on individual projects related to religion and intellectual life. The Ninth Coolidge Research Colloquium will be from June 4 to July 2, 1992, in Cambridge, MA. For information and brochure contact David A. Ames, Exec. Dir., ARIL, Box 1931, Brown Univ., Providence,RI 02912. Tel. (401) 863-2956. Application deadline: February 1, 1992.

Academic Dean Opening

Search for the position of Academic Dean. The Franciscan School of Theology, located in Berkeley, California, is an accredited theological school offering the Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies degrees. In addition, the School offers the Master of Arts degree in theology with the Graduate Theological Union and contributes faculty to the Graduate Theological Union's common Ph.D. and Th.D. programs.

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Coordinator Sabbatical Renewal in Ministry Program. The Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry of Boston College seeks a 10-month full-time Coordinator for its Sabbatical Renewal in Ministry Program. The Coordinator plans and implements all aspects of the program for persons experienced in ministry, including opportunities for academic, spiritual, cultural, and social enrichment. Coordinator is responsible for review and acceptance of applicants and provides academic counsel enabling participants to select theological, ministerial, and other courses best designed to enrich their sabbatical year. Person coordinates periodical programs, spiritual retreats, and trips. Also develops and facilitates weekly pastoral colloquia and events of a recreational and cultural character. A graduate degree in theology, ministry, or religious education required, substantial experience in church ministry including ministerial formation and renewal essential. Interpersonal and administrative skills necessary; background in group facilitation and leadership within religious communities preferred. Reports to Institute Director and supervises a part-time secretary. Excellent benefits available. Application deadline: December 15, 1991. Please forward cover letter, resumé and two letters of recommendation to Anita Ulloa, Sr. Personnel Officer, Department of Human Resources, Boston College, More Hall 315, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167. Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

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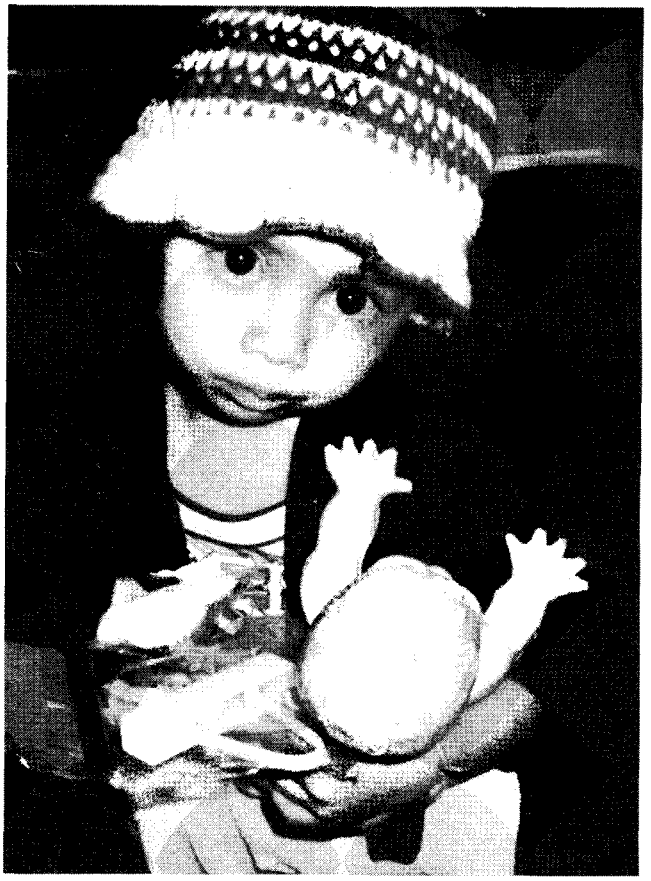

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